

Love me if you dare Chapter 21-40

Chapter 21

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Everyone laughs, even Shen Dan Wei. She sees Pei Ze's arm resting on Jian Yao's backseat. She smiles to Jian Yao: "Little Rabbit, beware of the big bad wolf."

"Me?" Pei Ze stares at her, then turns to Jian Yao, "Just ignore that."

Jian Yao reaches for her tea cup and raises it in front of her: "It's my second day on the job. Here's to you guys. Thank you for all your help. To the future!" Everyone raises their cups.

After a bit of wine and dine, Pei Ze asks on behalf of everyone: "Jian Yao, what's the background of Director Bo? You are working in his office. Have you found out anything about him yet? Share with us."

Jian Yao thinks for a while what she should share: "He seems to be related to the Chairman."

Everyone gets a little excited. Mei Chen asks: "How do you know this?"

Jian Yao: "Yesterday I heard him calling the Chairman 'sister' over the phone."

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Bo Jinyan: "If I were you, I would avoid physical contact with all of them. Some of them might be drug addicts. And drug addicts always carry some kind of infectious disease."

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Jian Yao: "Oh, sorry, Unintended physical touch."

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Her mother lives alone in an old house. Bo Jinyan shows her the documents from Ministry of Public Security. She shows them around the house. She is a quiet and timid lady. She brings them some tea then she leaves them by themselves in Wang Wan Wei 's room. Bo Jinyan says to Jian Yao: "A weak, introverted, and poor single mother with a daughter. Wang Wan Wei more or less rubs off some of her mom's character." Then he takes a look at her: "Surprisingly, you turned out fine."

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He finds a chair to sit down, passes a few journals to Jian Yao. They start to read.

The journals start from when she was 14 years old, and stops when she reaches 21, which is her second year in University.

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but cautious girl. Nothing truly dramatic happened in her high school years. She lived a normal life.

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Jian Yao asks the mother: "What did she say?"

With sombre and grief, she says: "..... It's was around midnight. It's an unusual time to call. She knows I rest early.... I should have known... She didn't say much... just that she is at a company retreat.... ask me to take care of myself. I didn't notice anything. She is always quiet and reserved.... If only I knew..... "

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Jian Yao: "What is a shortcut?"

Bo Jinyan: “The journals.”

Jian Yao thinks for a moment, still puzzled: “? Diary stopped in her second year of university.”

Bo Jinyan whistles softly. They are almost home. The neighbourhood look quiet and picturesque in this time of the night.

“People don't change their habits. She must have some recent diaries somewhere. We just need to find it.”

Jian Yao nods.

Surprisingly, Bo Jinyan adds: “You, for example, took three days to choose a toothbrush. Would you change your habit of taking time to find the right product?”

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Jian Yao says to Bo Jinyan: "You are right. She probably has a blog or something. I will go to the tech department and get her IP address. Then we should be able to find it with the help of your friends at the Ministry of Public Security."

Bo Jinyan: "Good. See you tomorrow."

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The next morning, while the others are busy with liaising with customers and making sales for the company, Jian Yao and Bo Jinyan sit in their office to continue with their investigation.

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June 1, 0:37am

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But he came to my room. To tell me he loves me.

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Oh my love. Why didn’t you talk to me earlier?

Oh my love, clean stream of water, handsome and shinning, why do you come now?

It’s too late. But thank you, thank you, for letting me know, that my life is not a total failure. You are the light of my life.

Diary stops here.

Not quite what Jian Yao and Bo Jinyan have expected. At least it’s not the short cut that Bo Jinyan is looking for. He thought it will give them reasons for her suicide, but like her suicide note. It’s obscure.

But there is one unexpected bonus - Someone from the office confesses his love to her on the night of the suicide.

This is an important clue, but the man did not mention it to the police.

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Chapter 22

Jian Yao says to Bo Jinyan: "I will find the opportunity to test out Mai Chen this morning?"

Bo Jinyan shakes his head: "No, ask him directly."

Jian Yao looks at him. Aren't they supposed to conceal their identities?

Bo Jinyan glances at her: "Do you think I'm an idiot?"

Ah, she almost forgets, this man is an expert on criminal psychology.

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Mai Chen comes into the room. He looks a little apprehended.

Bo Jinyan asks him to sit down: "Tech department called me yesterday. They managed to restore some of the data from Wang Wan Wei's computer, including her online diary. She mentioned that you confessed your love to her on the night that she died."

Mai Chen puts down his head. He keeps silent.

"Why did you conceal such an important piece of information from the police? It's a matter of integrity."

Mei Chen's face turns red. His head is still bowed. He sits there motionless.

Jian Yao is engrossed in watching the two of them. Then she sees Bo Jinyan blinks at her.

What is that supposed to mean? Is it her turn to speak? What is she supposed to say? She has no idea.

So Jian Yao decides to 'interpret' the blink the way she sees fit.

She gets up, pours a glass of water and passes it to Mei Chen.

Mei Chen: "..... Thank you."

Jian Yao looks up at the Bo Jinyan: " Director Bo, allow me to say a few words."

Jian Yao looks at Bo Jinyan. She is not sure if this 'good cop bad cop' tactic is what he is after, but she has to act fast.

She stands beside Mai Chen, says softly: "You do not have to be nervous. I think Director Bo is just concerned for the wellbeing of the whole division. Giving a false police statement can have serious consequences. Why don't you explain the situation to us and we can see what we can do."

Mai Chen looks up at them. With sadness in his eyes, he says: "I'm sorry. Yes, I did see Wang Wan Wei that night. I didn't expect her to commit suicide." He clears his throat, "Company policy does not allow colleagues to be in a romantic relationship. If it's found out, I will be fired immediately. So I dare not say anything."

Bo Jinyan looks to Jian Yao. He has not read through the employee manual.

Jian Yao nods. Yes, there is such a provision.

Bo Jinyan: "Can you tell us what happened that night?"

Mai Chen's eyes are red. He is trying to hold back the tears coming to his eyes: "That night, I had the sudden urge to let her know how I feel. I went to the villa she was staying.."

"What time was that?" Bo Jinyan interrupts him.

"Around midnight. It was pretty late by then, so I glanced at my watch before I left my villa. I saw lights shining from her room. I know she is still awake."

"Then what happened?" Jian Yao says softly.

Mai Chen took a deep breath, he says: "I told her that I like her very much. I want her to be my girlfriend. She said she will consider. So I went back to sleep, till the next morning."

Bo Jinyan: "What time did you leave?"

"12:30am or so."

"Did she seem unusual or different to how she usually behaves when you were together?" Jian Yao asks.

Mai Chen's face has bitter laugh: "I was too nervous, I did not pay much attention."

Bo Jinyan: "What else did you guys talk about?"

Mai Chen pauses for a moment: "That's it."

he does not want to talk about it anymore.

Is he concealing something? Or is it simply too painful to talk about it? Jian Yao is not sure. Should they continue? Should they let him go now? What should she do?

On this point, Bo Jinyan speaks: "Jian Yao, please tidy up Wang Wan Wei's online diary and send a copy to the police."

Jian Yao: "Yes, Director Bo. "

- Why does he suddenly mention the diary?

Mai Chen looks up: "Can I..... look at her diary?"

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Mai Chen is getting more and more emotional as he reads her diary.

As per Bo Jinyan's instructions, Jian Yao is only showing him the parts where she has a crush on Mai Chen. By the time he finishes, he is sobbing uncontrollably.

Jian Yao sits beside him. Her hand gently patting his back: "It's alright." Mai Chen's mood has spiralled out of control. He turns and hugs her tightly.

This is a normal reaction for someone looking for comfort. But it took Jian Yao a little by surprise. She stands motionless, allowing him to hold her and continues to comfort him. Then a cold voice from behind him says: "Do you not have bones to support your own body? Let go of her."

Hearing these words, Jian Yao and Mai Chen quickly separate.

- What sort of reaction is it? She remembers his 'infectious disease' theory. Is he concerned that she might get sick from a hug? But Mai Chen certainly doesn't seem to be a drug addict.

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"That day she was wearing a blue dress. Now I understand why she likes to wear blue. She had no make up on, wearing a pair of pearl earrings, had her hair down.... she is a pretty girl. Her eyes were a little red. But when I asked her what's wrong, she said she was ok."

..... After I asked her to be my girlfriend, she said she will consider. I said, that I would call her in an hour. But I didn't. I fell asleep. I was too tired. Maybe... I didn't keep my words... If only... I did call.. maybe she would still be alive?... I'm ashamed to mention this.... it's... my fault. "

Bo Jinyan asks: "Does anyone else in the department knows about your feelings towards her?"

"They are all aware of it." Mai Chen whispered, "That morning, when her body was found, I was out of control. Everyone saw me. They are just covering up for me."

-

Jian Yao tells Mai Chen to keep their conversation confidential. The Chairman is not keen for anyone else to know about it, and it's also to show respect for the dead. Mai Chen nods.

He walks out of Bo Jinyan office and returns to his seat. Zhou Qin, who sits next to him pats on his shoulder: "Are you ok?"

Anyone can tell that he cried.

Mai Chen is a little embarrassed: "Director Bo is not happy with the proposal I did. He gave me quite a hard time." He gets up and walks towards the toilets.

-

Jian Yao looks through the glass.

As if he can read her mind, Bo Jinyan says: " You feel sorry for him."

Jian Yao: "A little..."

"You shouldn't be." Bo Jinyan said, "It's because of his cowardice and guilt, that the truth behind her death is concealed from the police all this time."

He continues: "Call Yin Ziqi. Tell her we cannot continue with the investigation."

Jian Yao "Why?"

Bo Jinyan adjusts his posture: "Because this is a murder investigation. I must notify the police. We can't continue with the investigation in secret as she wishes. Bravo! "

Jian Yao is shocked.

"Why is it a murder? You said it yourself yesterday. She wrote the suicide note."

"I said she wrote the suicide note, but I never said she committed suicide." Bo Jinyan smiles : "Do you not see it? There are too many things that don't add up. This is a murder case. And the killer is one of your lovely colleagues in Customer 3 Division."

Chapter 23

Jian Yao takes her chair and puts it in front of him. She sits with her hands folded, resting on her knees and smiles sweetly: "Please explain."

- Oh... so docile.... a nice change.

Bo Jinyan's mind is thinking about other things: "Last Wednesday What did we have for breakfast?"

Jian Yao looks at him in surprise.

- What does that have to do with this case? Wednesday... breakfast...

Jian Yao: "Fish dumplings."

It was her first time trying to make them. It's quite a tedious process. She does not intend to make them again.

Bo Jinyan: "Tomorrow, I want to have it for breakfast again. And if you have no objections, let's get back to this case."

Jian Yao: "....."

That's like daylight robbery! But why is she not angry about it?

As she has not objected to the idea, Bo Jinyan smiles:

"First of all, Mai Chen said she was wearing a blue dress. That's her favourite colour, she should keep it on when she committed suicide, but the police records show she died in a black dress. The man she loved confessed his love to her. Even if she didn't change her mind about the suicide, it's highly unlikely she would change out of her lucky colour. That's not her personality. A timid girl like her will want some luck with her on her way to death.

Secondly, her mother's farewell phone call was made at 0:05am. Mai Chen left around 0:30am, the second call to her mom was 0:40am, but it didn't go through. If she didn't change her mind, why call again? To double the pain? And it's a very short time after Mai Chen left. The most logical conclusion is she gave up the idea of death, and she wants to hear the voice of her mother.

She wrote her last post at 00:37am, but her death was between 2:00-3:00am. This is unreasonable. Would she not write one last post to say goodbye to Mai Chen?

What did she do in those two hours before she died? She didn't call her home, didn't reject Mai Chen, didn't write a blog...And why did she

choose to take drugs to die? If the experience of the last six months made her feel dirty, why would she choose such a filthy way to die?"

Bo Jinyan ends with this statement: "This is too easy. Next time, please figure it out yourself. I am born to solve more complicated cases than this."

Jian Yao is digesting his words carefully, then she looks at him.

- Did he say... next time?

- There's NOT going to be a next time.

She asks Bo Jinyan: "Do you think Mai Chen's words are reliable?"

Bo Jinyan replies: "Yes. Besides, according to Wang Wan Wei's diary, her miserable life had nothing to do with Mai Chen."

Bo Jinyan adds: "There is one more thing. Mai Chen mentioned she was wearing a pair of pearl earrings. In the autopsy photos, she wasn't wearing anything. Go to the police station to check the evidence to see if there is a pair of earrings."

Jian Yao: "Okay."

Bo Jinyan picks up the phone: "I need to talk to you now."

After the other person has done talking, Bo Jinyan replies: "Then just end the meeting. Nothing is more important than a human life."

— — — —

Yin Ziqi is wearing a Chanel suit today. She sits in the sofa of Bo Jinyan's office and listens to the findings of the investigation.

Jian Yao did most of the talking, because Bo Jinyan said: "I do not want to repeat the same words again."

"..... So, we need to immediately notify the police, and suspend all of the work on this case." Jian Yao concludes.

Yin Ziqi remains silent for a moment, then looks at them calmly: "Thank you for the discovery, or I will not know there's a murderer in my company. "

Jian Yao nods.

Yin Ziqi continues: "However, can we keep it low-key? Why don't you continue with the investigation. Once you find out who's the murderer, we will inform the police. The media do not need to know about this. "

Jian Yao can understand her concerns. She is afraid of the impact on the business. But like Bo Jinyan says, it's a human life. A secret investigation can be very difficult.

Bo Jinyan: "No."

The room falls silent.

After a while, Yin Ziqi says to Jian Yao: "Ms Jian, can you give us a few minutes by ourselves."

-

Jian Yao gets out of Bo Jinyan's office.

Manager Lin asks : "Is everything ok?"

"Oh yes." Jian Yao replies, "The Chairman needs to talk to Director Bo in private."

Jian Yao finds an empty seat. Pei Ze glides his chair next to hers: "Are you busy today?"

Jian Yao looks up and smiles: "I am not sure, need to check Director Bo's schedule first."

Pei Ze smiles at her: "There's a new Cantonese restaurant that's just opened, wanna try later?"

- Do not have physical contact with them... drug addicts carries infectious diseases... do you not have any bone, let go of her.... She suddenly remembers Bo Jinyan's words

She has a sweet smile on her face: "Sorry, I am busy tonight."

Pei Ze: "Boyfriend?"

Jian Yao does not disagree. She gives Pei Ze a smile. He glides his chair back to his table.

-

Yin Ziqi looks at her brother. She is a little disappointed with him.

She knew Bo Jinyan from young. He is withdrawn, indifferent to everyone, including her. But they did spend a lot of time together. And they had some fun times too. In high school, she was the centre of attention. Bo Jinyan was the handsome and talented boy. Nobody suspected they were related. But once, her boyfriend cheated on her, she was devastated. She cried and cried at home. Bo Jinyan went to find the boy, and beat the crap out of him.

Then he went to university to study criminal psychology. He never bothers to initiate contact with her. Sometimes she wonders if he has any feelings for anyone. But undeniably, she is the only woman who

has been able to walk into his life. And this fact had always brought her a strange satisfaction and pleasure. But she will never bother to analyse why she feels this way. Is it because she is a proud sister, or it's more than that. Anyway, she has a brilliant life, a fiancé that is very nice to her. And he is her only brother. That's enough.

But Bo Jinyan has refused her request to her face, in front of an outsider. She is a little upset by it.

Yin Ziqi says to him: "This is a listed company. A murder scandal will cause our stock price to drop dramatically."

Bo Jinyan glances at her.

Yin Ziqi said: "This company is built by your father and my mother with their sweat and tears. And now it's my future and my life. Can you stand by to see your sister's life ruined?"

She sees that he is still not convinced. Yin Ziqi stands up from the couch to walk beside him. She puts her hand on his shoulder: "I don't want you to suspend the investigation, just do it in secret. It should be a piece of cake for you. You are so capable. I have never asked you for a favour in my life. This is the first time. Just this once. OK?"

-

Yin Ziqi walks out of Bo Jinyan's office. She is wearing a smile.

All the employees stand up to greet her: "Just had a chat with Director Bo. he is very satisfied with all of you. Good job. Keep it up. Wait for the bonus at the end of the year."

Everybody laughs. Manager Lin sees her out.

Jian Yao returns to Bo Jinyan's office.

"Book two tickets for tomorrow morning. We are going to the resort for site exploration."

-

Night. Bo Jinyan's apartment.

Jian Yao and Bo Jinyan are doing some prep work ahead of tomorrow's trip. There's quite a bit of information to go through, but she is getting tired.

Jian Yao do not know when she fell asleep, but when she opened her eyes, she realises she is on Bo Jinyan's bed. When did she go into his room?

She is still wearing the same white shirt and black knee high skirt she had earlier, but her slippers have been removed, and it's not on the side of the bed. Was she... carried into the room by Bo Jinyan?

He didn't just leave her on the couch, but carried her to his bed. That's unexpected... and sweet.

Classical music travels from the lounge into the hallway, where she is standing now. She slowly takes her step towards the lounge. She stops as she sees another unexpected scene.

Only the floor lamp is on in the lounge. She sees steam rising out of the big bathtub. No wonder he brought her into the room - he wanted to bathe in the living room.

But there's no one in the bathtub. She looks around, and sees him standing with only a towel around his waist. His entire back is exposed.

With the dim lighting in the room, the shadows give his body a nice definition. But soon, she also notices there's something on his back. Scars. Lots of scars. By the looks of them, they were caused by once deep wounds. In the night, they seem like ferocious vine flowers, blooming on his back.

- Where did these scars come from? Isn't he just responsible for analysing work? Arresting the criminals is the police's responsibility. That's what he said before.

She takes a closer look. The scars are neatly arranged, in rows. There are more than a dozen on the left, and on the right too.

Jian Yao stands in the dark. Then softly, she tip toes back into the bedroom.

Chapter 24

Jian Yao can't remember how long she's been asleep for ...again. A little bedside lamp is on, so it's not completely dark in the room.

But she vaguely remembers that at some point last night, she saw Bo Jinyan dressed in pyjamas standing on the side of the bed, looking for something. But soon, she fell asleep again.

She turns her head, and is surprised to find something lying beside her on the bed. Actually, it's someone. Actually, it is....Bo Jinyan.

- What?

She gets a fright from this scene.

He is lying very straight, with his hands on either side. The same sleeping position like the last time she saw him. Without the arrogant look on his face, he looks like a big boy when he is asleep.

But, when did he climb onto her bed?

Oh his bed.

Jian Yao tilts her body to look more closely at him. The room is so quiet, she can hear his breathing, and even feel the warmth of his breath coming towards her. Her heartbeat, silently accelerates.

Sweet dreams, Bo Jinyan.

-

The rays of the morning light shines through the window. Bo Jinyan is the first to wake up.

He sits up, then turns around to look at Jian Yao who is sleeping beside him.

It's the first time in his life that he's slept next to woman. He was exhausted last night when he went to bed so he didn't think too much about it.

She is still wearing the white shirt and black knee high skirt, revealing her legs. Her skin is so delicate and smooth. He can see her foot too. Soft, slender and beautiful.

She is sleeping on her side, and her whole person is in a crouching stance. He frowns. This position would put pressure on the heart. It's an unhealthy sleep posture. Bo Jinyan adjusts her body so she is facing up. He puts her hands and feet straight.

- That's much better. He slowly gets up and out of the room.

-

Jian Yao wakes up for the third time. The sky is completely bright. She looks at the clock. It's much later than she expects.

She hurries into the bathroom to wash her face. She lifts her head and see a woman with messy hair and wrinkly clothes starring at her... in the mirror.

Oh great! this is how Bo Jinyan saw her this morning when he woke up?!

— —

Bo Jinyan is in his black suit, sitting on a sofa reading the newspaper.

Jian Yao goes pass him. She needs to go back to her apartment to get changed when she hears a voice coming from behind the newspaper: "Where's my fish dumplings?"

- Oh no! She has completely forgotten about it.

Jian Yao: "..... I'll make it another day. We don't have time now."

She turns and see that there's already breakfast at the dining table. 2 bowls of congee and some shrimp dumplings. They're from a well-known shop in the neighbourhood.

- Bo Jinyan bothered to queue up to buy breakfast. That's so out of character for him. He used to say that the place is too crowded, too noisy and standing in queue is a time waster.

Even though she knows she won't get a nice answer out of him, she can't help but ask: "Did you buy them?"

And as expected...

"No." He put down his newspaper: "It just appeared out of thin air."

-

Jian Yao quickly goes home to freshen up. When she returns with her luggage, she sees Fu Ziyu sitting opposite Bo Jinyan, eating her share of the dumplings.

Fu Ziyu gives her a cheeky smile. She pretends not to notice and eats her congee.

When he finishes eating, he takes out a stack of documents and passes them to Jian Yao.

Jian Yao takes a look: "This is"

Fu Ziyu smiles: "Background check by a private detective on all the staff in Customer 3 Division. Of course, given the short timeframe, these are only preliminary results. Once I have more details, I'll update you."

Jian Yao looks to Bo Jinyan: "Wow, that's efficient."

Bo Jinyan smiles at her. - Of course that goes without saying.

— —

Jian Yao starts reading the documents in the car. Fu Ziyu is driving them to the airport.

Lin Yu Xuan - Manager. Career woman. Divorced. no kids. Work is life. Picky, Not very good tempered, often complain about residential

security guards / cleaning / restaurant services etc etc, Replaces part time maid every 3-4 months. She doesn't like Wang Wan Wei. Last year, she has twice wanted to transfer her out of the division or fire her, but was unable to do so because of department of labour regulations.

Jian Yao now realises Manager Lin don't know of their real identity and purpose in the division. She only think Bo Jinyan and Jian Yao are related to Chairman and thus given good positions in an elite team.

Zhou Qin - Typical nice guy. Everyone thinks highly of him, whether they are his coworkers, neighbours, or friends. His wife died two years ago, leaving behind a two year old son. He battled depression for a long time after his wife died. He devotes all his time to his son. He spent all his time outside work with him. Last year, a friend tried to match him with a beautiful young girl. He refused.

Qian Yu Wen - He is not originally from B city. Single. Homosexual. Likes to frequent gay bars. No fixed partner.

Shen Dan Wei - also from out of town. She frequent bars too. Gets on well with foreigners. changes a boyfriend every few months.

Pei Ze - fits the impression Jian Yao has of him - from a rich family, playboy, a well-known client in most of the city's nightclubs.

Mai Chen - The complete opposite to Pei Ze. He spends a lot of time looking after his parents, who were both paralysed after their stroke. A caring and filial son.

According to police records and meteorological data, it was raining heavily the whole night. So there is a possibility a lot of the evidence would have been washed away by the rain.

Jian Yao takes out a pen and paper, and list the room arrangement for the retreat :

Room A: Manager Lin, Shen Dan Wei *.

Room B: Zhou Qin.

Room C: Qian Yu Wen, Pei Ze *.

Room D: Mai Chen.

Room e: Wang Wan Wei.

In the original schedule, Shen Dan Wei and Wang Wan Wei should be in the same room. But because Manager Lin and Shen Dan Wei were working on a project together, they changed the sleeping arrangements.

Pei Ze should have stayed with Mai Chen, but he and Qian Yu Wen wanted to watch soccer together.

Based on what they told the police. No one left their room that night.

— —

Jian Yao thinks for a moment, turns to look at Bo Jinyan. He's put on a sleep mask to take a nap.

She pokes his arm: "Tell me. What do you think so far?"

Bo Jinyan just answers "I want to sleep. Don't forget, when you were still sleeping in that unhealthy posture, I had to go downstairs to buy breakfast."

Jian Yao blushes. She takes a glance at Fu Ziyu. Fu Ziyu is still driving, as if he didn't hear a word they were saying.

Jian Yao pretends she didn't hear those words too, and continues to poke Bo Jinyan: "Just sleep on the plane. The plane is surrounded by people. I won't be able to talk to you freely. If you don't teach me, how am I suppose to solve the case myself next time?"

- Ops. Next time?... It's a slip of the tongue.

Bo Jinyan takes off his sleep mask and smiles to her: "It's a deal!"

Jian Yao: "No no... I'm just using an analogy" He puts on his sleep masks again.

Then Fu Ziyu suddenly speaks: "Jian Yao. Do you find it crowded in this car?"

Bo Jinyan chips in: "What do you mean?"

Jian Yao is also a bit puzzled. Then she sees Fu Ziyu putting up three fingers. She suddenly understands why -

Three is a crowd. He's like the third person spoiling the privacy of a pair of lovers.

Jian Yao pretends she doesn't understand. Luckily Fu Ziyu has decided not to ridicule her anymore. He whistles as he continues to drive.

Then Bo Jinyan speaks: "Tell me what are your views first, then I'll tell you mine."

Jian Yao says: "First of all, the phone that didn't reach Wang Wan Wei's mom was during 0:04am. I suspect that it's because someone

went to see her, so she was interrupted. But of course, we will need to find out who this person was.

Secondly, the blue dress and pearl earrings. There's no reason why the murderer had to take away these two things, leaving loopholes in the case. so, something must have happened. Maybe the dress ripped, or the earrings torn, that the murderer had to take them away in order to avoid exposing signs of struggle.

Of all the suspects, I think Qian Yu Wen is more likely to be the killer. Although he is gay, there's something about him that make me very uncomfortable, even more so than that playboy Pei Ze"

After she finished, she looks expectantly at Bo Jinyan.

"Oh great." He nods, "Only one suspect, and it is based on speculation. Good job"

Jian Yao: "..... " A little disappointed, she asks: "So, what is your conclusion?"

"Preliminary Conclusions: Pei Ze and Qian Yu Wen, Manager Lin and Shen Jun Wei, One of these pairs contains a murderer and an accomplice.."

Chapter 25

The sun is out.

Bo Jinyan asks Fu Ziyu what's their current location.

Fu Ziyu: "We have nearly reached the toll station."

"Ah." He takes off his sleep mask, sits up and look at Jian Yao, "You finally got your wish, for me to do a briefing outside a tolling station."

Jian Yao remembers the last investigation. He refused to brief to the police over the phone.

"The curse of the tolling station....." She mumbles.

-

Bo Jinyan starts:

"In the past six months, Wang Wan Wei was controlled by drug addiction.

Her diary mentioned about 'wrong steps'. It's probably something to do with sex or drugs, or both. She said she 'couldn't resist fate', so someone had some information about her that she didn't want to be made public. I suspect it's nude photos or sex videos.

The person who is controlling her could only be one of these three: Shen Dan Wei, Pei Ze or Qian Yu Wen. It's not Manager Lin, as she tried every way she could to get her transferred or dismissed. If she wanted to play a game of cat and mouse, she wouldn't try to push her away.

It's not Zhou Qin. He was not interested in developing a relationship with a young pretty girl. Besides he devotes all his time to his son. There's no time for him to train up a sex slave.

All the staffs from Customer 3 division are very well paid. So this person's dominance is not about money, but purely to satisfy his/her desires. This person is experienced when it comes to taking drugs and fooling around. Shen Dan Wei, Pei Ze and Qian Yu Wen all meet these

criteria. Although Qian Yu Wen is a homosexual, we cannot rule out the possibility of him being a bisexual, so he is still one of the suspects."

Jian Yao is quiet. Under the guise of these well dressed and professional looking colleagues are souls that are dark and ugly. To use such dirty tactics on a young woman. It's hideous. No wonder Bo Jinyan warned her not to have any physical contact with them.

Bo Jinyan continues:

"Manager Lin knew what's going on but chose to keep quiet. Wang Wan Wei's diary mentioned that everything seemed to go wrong suddenly. Who else has the power to incite the crowd against her within the division? However, for Manager Lin to hate Wang Wan Wei so much, she might have done something to offend manager Lin. Perhaps Wang Wan Wei accidentally came across her misdemeanour (for example, accounting fraud). So Manager Lin is very eager to get rid of her. But according to the diary, Wang Wan Wei didn't seem to be aware of it. I will get the private detective to check out her financial status and private life.

The most important element in any murder is motive. Wang Wan Wei was trying to break free from the person's control. That angered the killer. It was pouring with rain on the night of the murder. The murderer must have returned to the room with muddy shoes or wet clothes. And two hours is a long time to be away from the room. Yet, no one admitted they ever leave their rooms. Therefore, the roommate must be covering up for him/her, making that person an accomplice."

— — —

The Orange Hill Resort is located on a recently developed tourist attractions to the south of B City. The developer is a company owned by Yin Ziqi.

This is also the crime scene.

The resort is built along a gentle hillside. There are five residences scattered amongst the trees. All the dwellings has the same layout - brown house with a hay roof, stone steps leading to the front door, a small courtyard at the back, surround by circle of green shrubs and flowers.

The villa is not open to the public as it's still under renovations. A few company staffs have come for their annual retreats, like Customer 3 Division. But because it's not taking in outsiders, there's no security on duty on the night of the murder. CCTV is not in operation.

No one has stayed at the resort since Wang Wan Wei's death.

Bo Jinyan and Jian Yao walks into the first room, where Wang Wan Wei stayed. The place looks tidy. There are no signs to suggest there's been a murder there.

From the backyard, it's less than 100m to the front door of Zhou Qin's residence. Pei Ze and Qian Yu Wen stayed in the third residence. From their lounge, they could see Zhou Qin's backyard clearly.

Mai Chen and Lin Yu Xuan's residences were on either side of these three residences.

So, the two pairs of suspects' residences were the furthest from Wang Wan Wei's place. But with the heavy rain, it would have been hard for anyone to hear what's happening outside of their residences.

--

When they walk out of Lin Yu Xuan's residence, the team of security guards which Bo Jinyan has arranged to come and help with finding evidence has arrived. Under Bo Jinyan's instructions, they start digging in certain parts of the courtyards.

--

Florescence testings came back negative. There's no evidence of blood in any of the rooms. Bo Jinyan filled several large boxes with the soil his men dug up, and sent them for analysis. The results should come back in a few days.

Yin Ziqi's assistant looks at the holes in the once nicely landscaped courtyards: "Should we fill the pits?"

To which Bo Jinyan answers: "Is that necessary? I will return all the dirt to you once the analysis is done."

-

For the next few days, Jian Yao has a lot of free time as they are waiting for the forensic results. She takes out some management manuals and business data. After all, she plans to go back to her original position when the investigation is over. But her brain keeps thinking about the case. What she used to enjoy doing now seems boring and not as meaningful.

Is this what happened to Bo Jinyan? That he slowly walked into a different world, and found it so interesting that he didn't want to leave?

— — —

Pei Ze seems to be interested in her. He finds excuses to be around her all the time. But he's has not asked her out on a date.... yet.

Jian Yao hopes that day never comes.

Friday night. Bo Jinyan and Jian Yao are in a Japanese restaurant. They are just starting dinner when Pei Ze calls.

Jian Yao sees the caller ID on her phone, and shows Bo Jinyan: "It's Pei Ze."

Bo Jinyan: "Take it."

Pei Ze: "Jian Yao, the rest of the team are coming to my house on Sunday for dinner. Zhou Qin is bringing his son too. You have to join us."

Jian Yao looks at Bo Jinyan.

Bo Jinyan: "Go!" He is moving his mouth but there's no actual sound coming out from him.

Jian Yao hesitates.

She covers the mic of her mobile with her hand and whispers to Bo Jinyan: "Will it be too dangerous?"

Bo Jinyan gives her a haughty look, as if she's raised a very stupid question.

"Would I throw you in the lion's den and not protect you?" He whispers.

Jian Yao picks up the phone: "OK. What time? Can you give me your address?"

-

It's close to midnight. Jian Yao has brought half her wardrobe to Bo Jinyan's house. They are trying to find something suitable for her to wear for Sunday's dinner.

"What should I wear?"

Bo Jinyan takes a look at the clothes she brought. Just as Jian Yao thought he'd give her some advice, he says: "You want me to imagine how you would look in these clothes? Sorry, I am not very good at that. Get change and show me."

The first set is a white T-shirt with beige pants. Bo Jinyan is sitting in the sofa. He is holding a book in one hand, and a coffee in the other. When she walks out, he looks up for a few seconds, then goes back to his book. "No," He said : "Next."

Summer clothes use softer fabrics. It's not easy to hide a pinhole camera and listening device without looking conspicuous. She tries on another five sets. Bo Jinyan will occasionally ask her to turn around, and look if there's a good place to attach a listening device.

They finally settle on a strip blue pinstripe cotton dress. The button like black circular pinhole camera is fixed on the V-shaped collar. And further down, a listening device hidden inside a silver brooch.

Next is to fit the ear piece, which obviously needs to go into one of her ears.

Jian Yao is sitting on a stool. Bo Jinyan kneels down facing her. His hand is holding the small piece of electronic device. Jian Yao can feel his soft fingertips touch her ears. It's a little numb, a little hot and a little itchy.

He's so close to her. She knows her face is starting to get red: "Are you done yet?"

"No." He looks at her: "Can't seem to fit it in with my fingers."

Jian Yao takes the mini communicators from his hand: "Let me try." She carefully slots it into her right ear.

"Will it fall?" She asks

Bo Jinyan: "Yes, so keep your head movements small tomorrow."

Jian Yao: "..... alright."

-

The next day, Bo Jinyan was out for the whole day. He didn't want Jian Yao to go with him. On Sunday afternoon, Jian Yao gets changed into the dress they've decided on. She goes to Bo Jinyan's apartment.

She is still nervous: "I'll be leaving soon. Are you sure I'm going to be okay?" When she asked him earlier what are his plans for protecting her, he just asked her to trust him, and that It's not something she needs to worry about.

Bo Jinyan smiles: "Take it easy, they are not going to kill you today."

- Gee.. thanks for the reassurance.

Jian Yao takes a taxi to Pei Ze's apartment. She speaks softly: "I am there"

"Ah, I know." Bo Jinyan's deep melodious voice is coming through her right ear. Jian Yao thought he is seeing through the camera, and then she hears him say: "I'm right behind you."

Jian Yao turns around and sees a familiar black Lexus - It's Fu Ziyu's car, parking on the side of the road. Then slowly, a dark window is lowered down, a man puts out his hand and waves upward. He is motioning her to go. .

Jian Yao suddenly laughs.

Is that his arrangement? To follow her here?

But knowing he's nearby gives her the courage. She lifts her head and walks into the apartment building.

Chapter 26

Actually, how dangerous can it be to go to Pei Ze's house for dinner? In her heart, Jian Yao knows it's not that bad. Like Bo Jinyan says, it's highly unlikely something will happen to her.

-

Pei Ze's home is lavish penthouse suite, with a panoramic view overlooking the city.

Jian Yao is holding a drink, sipping slowly. Since she arrived, she has been quietly listening to the conversations of the others. At the moment, the topic of conversation is Bo Jinyan.

Shen Dan Wei is sitting opposite Jian Yao: "So... Director Bo has no girlfriend?"

Jian Yao replies: "I am not sure."

Shen Dan Wei asks: "Well, has he ever asked you to order flowers for girls, buy presents on his behalf, make dinner reservations etc etc... If not, he must be single."

Jian Yao smiles. She does not answer. Pei Ze hears the conversation from the kitchen. He shouts out: "Are you interested in him? Well, if you are not afraid to lose your job, go ahead and woo him?"

Shen Dan Wei laughs loudly. Then she continues to talk to others in the lounge: "I bet you he is still a virgin."

The men all laugh aloud. Pei Ze shouts from the kitchen again: "I second that."

Then Jian Yao finally hears Bo Jinyan from the ear piece : "A bunch of morons!"

Jian Yao smiles.

Qian Yu Wen leans back on the sofa: "How can you be so sure? He's quite an attractive guy with a great body. Maybe he has a different side to him outside of work..."

Faced with his doubts, Shen Dan Wei replies: "Man and woman who are deprived for a long time usually behaves strangely, like Director Bo and Manager Lin. They are more critical and easily irritable, it's a result from abstaining from sex for too long."

She glances at JYao: "You are a woman. Do you think I am right?"

Jian Yao thinks for a while. She answers truthfully: "That's possible..."

Jian Yao hears a groan of disgust on the other end.

-

Inside Bo Jinyan's car.

His seat is adjusted to a comfortable position. His lap top is showing the images transferred from the hidden camera in Jian Yao's brooch. He has a walkie talkie on the seat beside him.

"Professor Bo, our team is in position."

He picks up the walkie talkie: "Good."

-

Jian Yao is chatting with others when she hears a lot of background noise from the ear piece. She excuses herself to the toilet.

She ask Bo Jinyan: "Sounds like there's a lot of people at your end."

Bo Jinyan: "I told you I have made some arrangements."

- So he is not alone. He brought helpers.

Her heart is at ease : "Thank you"

Bo Jinyan replies : " Don't have to thank me. Critical and irritable people like to be cautious."

Jian Yao: "....." So vengeful !!

-

Food is ready.

The main course was lobster and king crab, Pei Ze is sitting next to Jian Yao. He whispers to her ear: "I saved the best pieces for you. They are in the platter that's in front you. Enjoy."

"..Urr.. thank you." She says. He is leaning too close to her. Jian Yao tries to moves away. He smiles at her: "Oh, you blush so easily."

Jian Yao is repelled by his actions: "Really? Maybe it's bit hot in here."

After a few seconds, Pei Ze calls out to Jian Yao : "Look this way." Unconsciously, she looks up and sees a white flash. Pei Ze puts down the phone, and continues to eat leisurely.

Jian Yao: "Why did you take a photo of me? Delete it."

Pei Ze whistles: "That is my freedom. Nowadays, it's hard to find ladies that blushes so easily."

-

After the meal, Jian Yao goes to the bathroom.

"Hey." She whispers to Bo Jinyan.

"Ah?" He replies in his deep voice. "What happened?"

Jian Yao says: "When the case is over, I want that photo deleted from his phone."

"Of course." He replies.

Jian Yao feels better. She goes back to the living room.

-

Just as she reaches the living room, Zhou Qin is helping his son to put on his backpack: "Bye Jian Yao! The little guy needs a shower, and he still has some homework he needs to finish. See you at work tomorrow."

"Bye" Jian Yao replies. From what she has observed this afternoon, Zhou Qin really is a loving and gentle father.

-

The remaining four people play a board game. When the game is over, Shen Dan Wei says to the others: "I am leaving now. My boyfriend is waiting for me downstairs."

Jian Yao takes the opportunity: "It's getting a little late. I should go too."

Pei Ze takes her hand bag from her: "It's hard to find a taxi in this neighbourhood. I'll drive you home."

Jian Yao: "... that's fine... I can.."

Pei Ze starts to walk towards his room with her bag: "Just wait. I'll get the car keys."

Jian Yao is still trying to resist: "I don't want to trouble you."

By then, Shen Dan Wei has left. Pei Ze changes his mind: "Hey, Qian Yu Wen. Can you give me a hand with the dishes?."

Qian Yu Wen looks at him. He chuckles: "Am I your maid?" But then, he still rolls up his sleeves and walks into the kitchen.

Only Pei Ze and Jian Yao are left in the living room.

"Let me give you a house tour?" Pei Ze says.

Jian Yao hesitates. On the other end, Bo Jinyan is giving her the instruction: "Take the tour."

-

It is obvious that the owner of the house is wealthy and knows how to enjoy life. All the appliances are the latest models of top brands. There is a special room with fitness equipment and game consoles. He stands next to a cabinet, where there are some novels and car magazines. There's also a lot of ornaments in the room- Cars, boxing gloves, flute, and even ink stone and a brush for Chinese writing. Jian Yao asks: "You like calligraphy?"

He smiles: "Just a novice."

A voice from the living room: "I'm done." says Qian Yu Wen: "See you tomorrow." Then they hear the front door closes.

The house is suddenly very quiet.

Jian Yao says to Pei Ze: "I should go too."

Pei Ze smiles: "OK, wait in the living room. I'll get my keys."

-

Jian Yao collects her hand bag from the couch.

Bo Jinyan starts the engine. He's ready to trail Pei Ze's car.

Suddenly, a voice from his walkie talkie: "3rd position reports. He is shutting off the main electricity switch for his house."

The surveillance screen on Bo Jinyan's laptop turns black.

-

Suddenly, it's dark everywhere.

Jian Yao tries to keep calm: "Pei Ze, is it a power cut?"

No one answers.

Bo Jinyan tells Jian Yao over the ear piece: "He switched off the power. Wait and see."

Jian Yao reaches for the mini defibrillator in her handbag. She hears a light footsteps coming towards her.

"Ah, how unfortunate. A power cut." It's Pei Ze's voice, "I can't find the car keys."

Chapter 27

Jian Yao is scared. She pauses for a moment: "I'll call a taxi." She turns, estimates which direction the front door is and starts to walk slowly.

"Wait Jian Yao, I have something to say to you." Pei Ze's voice is coming closer towards her.

Jian Yao: "What is it that you want to tell me?"

Pei Ze suddenly laughs: "You are a brave girl. Wang Wan Wei, you know, your predecessor. The two of you look alike, but your personality is so different."

Jian Yao's heart starts to thump.

"Why are you suddenly mentioning her?" Jian Yao asks with a calm voice, "She used to be your girlfriend?"

Pei Ze replies: "Nah. You remind me of her. That's all. Wait there, I'll be out soon."

She can hear the sound of something being wheeled out.

"The Pei Ze you usually see, that's not the real me" He says.

Jian Yao's getting more and more nervous: "Then what is the real you like?"

"You'll find out. But now, let's the show begin." He smiles. "Can you not tell, it's my plan all along, that I would have some private time with you tonight?"

"Do you have a torch or some candles at home?" Jian Yao tries to sound calm.

"No, it's more fun this way." Pei Ze is getting closer and closer.

Jian Yao starts to run towards the door: "! Do come near me..... ah"

Suddenly, she trips over something. Jian Yao loses her balance and her body falls forward to the ground. In the chaos, the listening device has dropped out. It only picks up sound within a small range. Bo Jinyan might not be able to hear her anymore. And with no lights, he can't see what's going on. She is completely on her own now!

She hears Pei Ze footsteps coming towards her: ".. I told you to wait for me. Come, I'll pull you up. Suddenly, she feels something falling on top of her. It's Pei Ze. They both cry out of pain.

Jian Yao's whole body tense up and shouts: "Get off me!"

Pei Ze is not moving: "Hey, you tripped me with your foot. Come on, give me a kiss first."

Jian Yao can't bear it anymore. She kicks him in the chest.

- Ouch! He quickly grabs her foot to stop her from kicking him again. Jian Yao tries to break free from him, but he is stronger than her.

-

After he has lost contact with Jian Yao, Bo Jinyan quickly gets out of the car and rush to the apartment.

"What's the situation like up there?" He asks through the walkie talkie.

"No. 1, 3, 4 and 5 has limited vision where they are positioned. No.2 can see what's going on in the lounge with his infra red night vision goggles and through the telescope on his sniper gun. Suspect A is lying on top of Bird. Do you want him to shoot?"

"Suspect A" is Pei Ze code, "Bird" is the code name for Jian Yao.

Bo Jinyan is walking into the elevator. He ponders: "Be ready, but don't shoot yet. Continue to observe."

The elevator has gone up two floors, sniper speaks again: "Report: bird struggled, the suspect has grabbed Bird's right leg. Should we..."

Bo Jinyan stops him in mid sentence: "What are you waiting for? Shoot!"

-

Pei Ze's Penhouse Suite.

Pei Ze is still not letting go of her. But suddenly he laughs: "Don't be so tense. I just want to give you a surprise."

He lets go of her leg: "Your skin is so smooth Get up! I'll give you a hand. Ok Ok, I will turn the lights back on. Happy?"

Jian Yao is not sure what he is up to. She just wants to get out of there as soon as possible.

Just as she tries to sit up, she hears a small piercing sound. "What? " He whispers something in his mouth. Suddenly, Pei Ze's body falls on her again.

He lies motionless. Still as a corpse.

Jian Yao quickly pushes him away. She staggers to get up against the wall.

..... What's happened to Pei Ze? As she wonders, the phone rings. She reaches for her pocket. It's Bo Jinyan.

She quickly reports to him: "Bo Jinyan, Pei Ze is unconscious. I am not sure what happened..."

"Open the door." Bo Jinyan interrupts her, "I am standing outside."

-

"You arranged a sniper?" Jian Yao looks at Bo Jinyan. She is surprised. Although it's in order to protect her. But it seems like his actions are a bit over the top.

He turns the power switch back on. He walks over to where the listening device is and picks it up.

Bo Jinyan leaps over Pei Ze's unconscious body: "It's just anaesthetic. He will wake up in an hour's time."

Jian Yao and Bo Jinyan walks into the next room, where there is a trolley on wheels. There's a white cloth covering the top. This is what Pei Ze was trying to push out just now.

Bo Jinyan uncovers the trolley.

A Cake.

It is actually a fruit mousse cake with the words Happy Birthday on it. There are candles on the cake, covered by a plastic lid. Next to the cake is a plastic knife and a couple of paper plates.

Bo Jinyan turns to look at her: "It's your birthday today?"

Jian Yao is a little surprised to see the cake. She nods. It is her birthday, based on the Western calendar. She usually celebrates her birthday according to the lunar calendar, as that's the tradition of her hometown. .

She looks at Pei Ze, who is 'lying dead' on the ground. He did all that, just to surprise her with a birthday cake?

Now in retrospect, those words seems to make sense: Tonight program, everything is planned, wanted to surprise you

As if he could read minds, Bo Jinyan says coldly: "How can you be sure he didn't have other motives?"

Jian Yao remembers some of the other comments he made... Nice skin... kiss me...

"What should we do now?" She asks. When Pei Ze wakes up, he will be suspicious. Their identities will berevealed!

Bo Jinyan walks up to her: "Give me your taser.

Jian Yao hands it over to him.

Bo Jinyan knees down next to Pei Ze. He pressed the taser onto his back. Even though Pei Ze has lost consciousness, his body moved a little when the electric charges went through his flesh.

Bo Jinyan throws the taser back to her: "Solved. Just tell him it was you."

Jian Yao : "..... alright."

Bo Jinyan suddenly reaches down and pull out a few hairs from Pei's Ze's head.

Jian Yao: "What are you doing?"

"DNA testings." Bo Jinyan replies. "To compare with some DNA results from the soil samples we collected from the resort."

Jian Yao: ".....Oh."

-

Bo Jinyan takes a quick look around his apartment, then retreats back to the car.

When Pei Ze finally wakes up, it's past 9:00pm.

Pei Ze rubs his head and back, looks up at Jian Yao: "What did you do to me?"

Jian Yao looks at him: "Sorry, I carry a taser for self defence. Now that you are ok, I'd better go."

Pei Ze stops her: "At least cut the cake before you go, I especially ordered it from the best cake shop in town. Or else I won't forgive you."

— —

Pei Ze is not in the best of moods after what happened. After eating the cake, he drives Jian Yao home.

Jian Yao : "Well, thanks for the ride. See you tomorrow."

Suddenly she hears a "thump" sound, the door is automatically locked. Pei Ze turns to stare at her: "After all that you have put me through, a simple apology is not enough."

Jian Yao : "Lunch is on me tomorrow?"

"I want this." Pei Ze suddenly leans over toward her and pulls out a few strands of her hair.

Jian Yao: ".....?"

Ze Pei smiles: "I think the most beautiful part of a woman's body is her hair. This is mine to keep, as compensation. And we are going for lunch tomorrow too."

While in the elevator, Jian Yao thinks to herself.... Bo Jinyan took Pei Ze's hair. Now Pei Ze takes her hair. What is this all about?

-

Bo Jinyan needs to debrief his special force. He told Jian Yao he won't be home for another two hours. Jian Yao takes a shower and get changed into her pyjamas. She is exhausted.

She plans to wait up for him, but unwittingly falls asleep.

And she has a dream.

In the dream, a man is pressing down her limbs to restrict her movements. She struggles desperately, but is not able to break away. The man is laughing. "Hi Jenny." He says.

Jenny is her English name.

Jian Yao wakes up in a cold sweat. She immediately switches on her bedside lamp.

Must be due to all the tension from today.

The doorbell rings. She looks at the clock. 1:00am.

She opens the door. Bo Jinyan is standing outside.

He glances at her. His eyes are clear and sharp as ever: "Everything is back to normal. Goodbye."

He turns around, ready to go. Jian Yao says to him: "Wait."

He turns back to look at her.

Jian Yao steps forward, tiptoes, reaches out and hugs him.

Her heart is still beating very fast.

She can feel her hands trembling.

He just stands still for her to hug him.

Jian Yao says softly: "I was really scared today."

Jian Yao is about to release him, and she feels his arms around her waist. He takes a small step forward. Now their bodies are touching. She can feel the warmth of his embrace.

Jian Yao relaxes in his arms.

She hears his deep voice: "3 snipers, five special force agents. It's enough to destroy a whole triad gang. What's there to be afraid of?"

Jian Yao cannot help laughing.

Jian Yao lets go of him. Her face is flushing, but she tries to sound calm: "Good night."

Bo Jinyan smiles: "Goodnight."

He walks to the elevator. Just before the lift doors closed, he pressed the 'open' button. He looks out and says to Jian Yao: "Happy birthday. I hope you will be... smarter... next year."

Jian Yao: "What sort of birthday greeting is that?"

— — —

Everything was normal the next day. Jian Yao took Pei Ze out for lunch. But much to Pei Ze's disappointment, She also called all the other colleagues to join them.

After lunch. In Director Bo 's office.

There are some documents on Bo Jinyan's desk that Jian Yao has not seen before.

Jian Yao immediately asks: "Are the result back yet?"

"Read it yourself" Bo Jinyan says with a smile.

Jian Yao picks up the file and reads carefully.

"1. In Zhou Qin's backyard, they found a pearl earring;

2. Strains of Wang Wan Wei's hair are found on the cracks of the front steps of Lin Yu Xuan and Shen Dan Wei's residence.

Jian Yao looks at Bo Jinyan : "How are these evidences helpful? Have you already guessed who is the murderer?"

Bo Jinyan walks up to her, with a teapot in his hand. He pours her a cup of tea. That's so out of his character. He must be really excited.

He replies to Jian Yao confidently: "Yes, I've figured it out. I need to verify a few things first. After that, I'll tell you."

Jian Yao wants to ask another question. But he continues : " Tell Yin Ziqi to arrange another meeting for the Customer 3 Division at the resort. I want them to have the same room arrangement as last time. And make sure you pick a rainy day."

"What do you want to do?"

Bo Jinyan looks down at her: "I will do a replay of what happened that night."

Chapter 28

They are on their way to the Orange Hill Resort.

Jian Yao sits a little closer to Bo Jinyan . She asks softly: "Tell me who is the murderer, ah."

She has not seen him since he 'announced' that he wanted to 'replay' what happened on the night. He left the office promptly after giving Jian Yao a list of instructions. It was a short notice, and there were plenty of things for Jian Yao to organise. Now that they are in a car together, just the two of them, Jian Yao can't wait to find out what's in his mind.

Bo Jinyan : "Not telling you."

Is he trying to keep her guessing? But that's not his style. Besides he did say he needs to verify something first.

Jian Yao asks: "Are we still lacking some evidence? Is that why you want everyone there?"

"No" Bo Jinyan answers, "We already have enough evidence. I just want the murderer there so that I can shame him....or her."

Jian Yao: "....." Okay. That's a standard Bo Jinyan type answers.

She quits asking. The low rays of the sun shine through the windows of the back seat. Bo Jinyan face's has a soft golden glow.

Jian Yao looks at him. He looks handsome, noble even. Last night's embrace returns to her mind. The warmth that surrounded her.

But... he's probably forgotten about it. After all, his brain only has room for his work.

-

Yin Ziqi has arranged a special meeting at the Orange Hill Resort. She is a little anxious about what will happen. Like Jian Yao, Yin Ziqi has asked Bo Jinyan who is responsible for Wang Wan Wei's death several times. Bo Jinyan didn't tell her much, only to arrange several security guards to be at the scene, ready to escort the murderer to the police.

-

When the dinner reception finishes, it's past 10:00pm. It's a rainy night, as Bo Jinyan has hoped for. Staffs from Customer 3 Division are sitting in a minivan. It's going to an area of the resort that is familiar to them. They arrive at the residences. When they realise where they will be staying tonight, the mood in the van changed dramatically. Suddenly, there are no more jokes, no more gossips or laughs. The team looks at each other.

Seven people, carrying luggage, are standing in front of the residences. Not far behind stands Yin Ziqi assistant, and several bodyguards.

"Room are assigned" Jian Yao is holding a stack of cards handing them out to the group, "in the same arrangement as on 1st of June, the night Wang Wan Wei died."

This is the opening line Bo Jinyan asked her to use.

Everyone takes their room card. They are disconcerted by this loaded statement.

Lin Yu Xuan is the first to speak: "Director Bo, what does this mean?"

Bo Jinyan gives what is probably the first real smile they've seen since they first met him: "It's what on your mind. We are going to recapitulate the strings of events that led to Wang Wan Wei's death."

Jian Yao further explains. "Director Bo and I are sent to investigate Wang Wan Wei's suicide by Chairman Yin. There are a few things we want to clarify, therefore we need your help."

Everyone is quiet.

Pei Ze glances at Jian Yao, with a wily smile: "Didn't you say it's a suicide? What's there to clarify?"

Mei Chen starts to scan the faces of others. Qian Yu Wen face is dull and expressionless as he usually is, Zhou Qin is stunned.;Lin Yu Xuan and Shen Dan Wei is looking at each other, not saying a word.

Bo Jinyan ignores Pei Ze's question: "Thank you for your cooperation. Now get into your rooms, and we will come to speak to each one of you shortly."

-

Jian Yao and Bo Jinyan enters Wang Wan Wei's residence.

This is their monitoring quarter. Bo Jinyan has arranged for video cameras and listening devices in each of the other four residences. Facing them is a row of monitors, showing what's happening in each of the rooms.

Jian Yao lay down their luggage, sits down with him in front of the screens.

Room A: Manager Lin and Shen Dan Wei are not talking to each other. They each sit on their side of the bed. Manager Lin takes out her mobile phone, then puts it down again. Shen Dan Wei is looking out of the window, with an obscure and sarcastic smile on her face.

Room B: Zhou Qin is also sitting on the bed. He calls home: "Mom, is Le Le in bed? No... Mmm... daddy miss you too...."

Room C: Pei Ze throws his overnight bag on the bed. He walks into the bathroom, humming a tune at the same time. After a while, he comes out. Qian Yu Wen goes up to him. He whispers something Bo Jinyan and Jian Yao can't quite hear. Then both of them rest in the lounge. They turn the TV on, and casually chats with one another.

Room D: Mai Chen stands at the window, absorbed in his own thoughts.

— — — —

0:01am

Jian Yao talks into the intercom on the table : "Mai Chen, please come over to our room."

Everyone is startled. Because the broadcast can be heard in all the residences.

Mai Chen approaches with a little apprehension, takes a seat facing Bo Jinyan .

"Director Bo, Wang Wan Wei... is murdered?" He asks solemnly.

"Who knows!" Bo Jinyan replies lightly.

Jian Yao observes the reactions of others through the monitors. Everyone looks up when they hear the conversation.

Mai Chen stayed in this room for 30 minutes. Then he returned to his own residence. Jian Yao and Bo Jinyan follows him back to his place.

Bo Jinyan : "Repeat what you did that night after you returned from Wang Wan Wei's room. Try to recall all the details."

Mai Chen takes a shower, then turns on the TV. He has a quick supper of cookies and water, then he goes to bed.

-

Jian Yao and Bo Jinyan returns to Wang Wan Wei's room. Jian Yao says to Bo Jinyan : "Anything worth noting?"

Bo Jinyan replies: "Some minor differences from the police statement, like sequence of events, what he said to Wang Wan Wei etc. This is normal for people who are trying to recall events of the past. Overall, his actions are consistent with his testimony. There's no loopholes. He is telling the truth."

-

Rain is getting heavier.

Bo Jinyan is holding a large umbrella, sharing it with Jian Yao. They are now in Pei Ze and Qin Yu Wen's place. Jian Yao carries the intercom machine with her and places it close to where Pei Ze is sitting. The four of them are sitting in the living room. The television is showing a soap opera. From Jian Yao's angle, she can see Zhou Qin's backyard through the windows.

"Sorry Director Bo Oh.... or is it Officer Bo..." Pei Ze smiles: "We were watching a soccer game that night, but there's no match on today. Is Soap opera ok?"

"Whatever." Bo Jinyan walks to the window, then turns back and smile at them, "Anyway, you weren't really watching the game that night."

The two guys look shocked. Qian Yu Wen speaks up: "I don't understand what you are talking about."

"You don't?" Bo Jinyan looks at Jian Yao, "Tell them what we found in Zhou Qin's backyard."

Jian Yao holds up a transparent plastic bag with the pearl earrings.

"This belongs to the deceased, Wang Wan Wei." Bo Jinyan says faintly, "Mai Chen said she was wearing them when he saw her that night. Yet, when the body was found, the earrings were missing. I believe no one would purposely take the earrings and throw it in the backyard. It can only mean that she came by here before she died."

Why would a girl come around at that time of the night? The earrings were found less than two metres from your living room window. It is impossible that both of you didn't notice she was here."

Pei Ze sneers. "We were concentrating on the game. It was raining, so we turned up the volume. It's totally possible that we couldn't hear her."

-

Jian Yao is wearing a raincoat, standing where the earrings were found. After a while, she quickly runs past the window.

As she runs past, her body blocks the light that's coming through a lamppost that shines straight into the living room. It casts a large shadow. She was so close to the window, it's very hard to miss.

"Imagine, she must have been in some distress in order for the earrings to fall. She was either having a dispute with someone, or running very quickly. If you were in the lounge, you would have noticed her." says Bo Jinyan .

Qian Yu Wen's hands are clenched, his face turns pale. Jian Yao returns to the room. She is completely soaked from the rain. Bo Jinyan smiles at her: "Good job."

Pei Ze gives a laugh: "Well, alright. We didn't watch the game. We weren't in the lounge. We were in the room."

Bo Jinyan : "Oh. So you've decided to change your testimony? Just like that? What makes you think we will believe you?"

"Huh" Pei Ze takes a deep breath and answers faintly, "We were in the room, making love the whole night. We didn't want others to know. Does that answer your question?"

— — — —

Bo Jinyan and Jian Yao goes back to their residence.

Bo Jinyan replayed the video clips of the other rooms. When Pei Ze admitted having sex with his roommate: Zhou Qin closed his eyes. He gave a big sigh and covered his face with his hand. Lin Yu Xin looked stunned and Shen Dan Wei was still wearing her sarcastic smile.

Chapter 29

Raindrops come pelting out of the sky. It's a busy yet somewhat soothing sound as the rain brushes the windows and hit the roof. But it is not enough to calm the anxious minds.

Of course, there is still one person in the Orange Hill resort that is calm and collected. Bo Jinyan is sitting in front of the monitors, observing the reactions of each staff member of Customer 3 Division.

"Zhou Qin is next?" Jian Yao is trying to brush away some of the water vapours that's on her wet garment. She is wearing a blue dress today, similar design to the one Wang Wan Wei was wearing that night.

"No, that's not necessary." Bo Jinyan leans back and rest with hands behind his head, "Their reaction have told me everything I need to know."

Jian Yao is a little baffled.

He used the earring to force Pei Ze and Qian Yu Wen to admit that they were having sex just so that he can see the reactions of others?

-

A man's hand, holding a dark blue handkerchief appears in front of her.

"Hair." Bo Jinyan says.

"Thank you." Jian Yao wipes off the water drops that are on her face. Bo Jinyan is starring at her forehead. Her hair, still wet from the rain, is resting on her soft supple skin.

"Don't you feel uncomfortable?" He looks at her.

Jian Yao wonders why he is suddenly interested in her wet hair. He stands up and walks over to her. He takes the handkerchief.

- Surely he is not going to dry my hair. A thought flashes past her.

He uses his handkerchief to blot up the water drops that hanging at the tip of her fringe. It has a clean cotton smell, as well as a slight warmth that's been transferred from his hand.

And he is looking down at her, with a "can't you even take care of yourself properly?" look on his arrogant face. But his gaze is gentle and warm. The handkerchief is gliding down her face, past her ears, along the cheeks. His slender fingers 'accidentally' touches her skin from time to time.

Jian Yao's face starts to blush.

The man

What is in his mind as he is doing this?

Just giving her a hand because she can't even do such a trivial task properly?

— — — —

Bo Jinyan walks over to the phone. He picks up the receiver and ask Yin Ziqi's assistant to arrange for a vehicle to send Pei Ze, Qian Yu Wen

and Mai Chen to the resort conference centre. He tells them that the investigation is over. They can relax now.

-

Five people are standing in the pouring rain, in the dark. They are standing on the grass area between Zhou Qin and Lin Yu Wen / Shen Dan Wei's room. This is Bo Jinyan's idea. He will ask a few questions with all of them there. Jian Yao asked him why they had to stand in the rain. To which, Bo Jinyan replied, "It's harder to hide one's guilty conscience under such circumstances."

Bo Jinyan is holding a big black umbrella. Jian Yao is leaning towards him as they are sharing the shelter. He looks at Zhou Qin: "Your turn." He talks above the white noise of the rain hitting the ground.

Zhou Qin answers: "I do not know. I was sleeping."

"Let me explain to you." Bo Jinyan says coldly, "Wang Wan Wei's diary reveals that someone has been using drugs to control her for the past six months. We have sufficient evidence to believe that the person went to her room that night. Why would a young lady run out of the room so late at night, when it's pouring with rain? Unless it is to get away from her killer. And what a coincidence, that one of her earrings is found in the courtyard behind your residence."

Zhou Qin's face turns white: "I have no idea what you are talking about."

Bo Jinyan turns to the other two ladies.

"What do you have to say?"

Lin Yu Xuan: "We worked till midnight. Then we went to bed. We didn't notice anything suspicious."

"Oh?" Bo Jinyan smiles at them, "I am afraid the evidence points otherwise."

Jian Yao takes out a copy of the investigation report.

Bo Jinyan : "We know that Wang Wan Wei went into your backyard. There were signs of struggle. We found some of her hair not far from your lounge window."

"..... I do not know." Lin Yu Xuan's face is turning pale.

Shen Dan Wei: "I didn't hear or see anything."

"Never mind." Bo Jinyan says. "At this point in time, there's nothing to suggest Pei Ze, Qian Yu Wen and Mai Chen have anything to do with the murder. I believe they are innocent. But based on the evidence we have, the culprit is one of you. I will hand you over to the police. Bon Voyage. "

"Director Bao, I am innocent!"

"You can't convict me just like this! !"

"Are you kidding!"

The three of them starts to protest.

Bo Jinyan turns around and ask Jian Yao to arrange for the security guards to come. Then he turns around and says to the three of them: "Let me give you some tips. Based on the evidence, the killer will receive a death penalty, accomplices... probably three to five year sentence. You'd better be prepared."

— — — — -

The security guards took everybody to the conference centre. The three of them are locked in a room while waiting for the police to come. Jian Yao and Bo Jinyan wait in another room.

Someone knocks at the door.

A middle-aged man, dressed in civilian clothes, comes in.

"Hi, Professor Bo. I am Huang Xi from the Urban Criminal Investigation team. I've heard a lot about you." The man gives Bo Jinyan a polite handshake.

Bo Jinyan smiles: "Officer Huang, I will hand over the suspects to you. How long do you think the interrogation will go on for?"

"We'll do our best." He walks out.

Jian Yao walks up to him: "What are you up to?"

As if to stop her asking any further, he takes out his sleep mask and uses it to cover his eyes: "I need to rest. Stop bothering me."

One of Jian Yao's greatest virtues is patience. After hearing what Bo Jinyan says, she goes to the other side of the room to lie down on a sofa. After all, it is very late. She can do with some sleep too.

The way he handled the case thus far is not what she would expect from him. It's very unlikely for him to conclude who the murderer is based on such superficial evidence.

He seemed like a different person. Like he is ...acting... ah.

"You were just scaring them, right? So that they will tell you who the murderer really is?" Jian Yao turns around and asks.

Bo Jinyan takes off his sleep mask and looks at her.

"Congratulations. It seems that your birthday wish from me has been granted by the gods."

Jian Yao: "....." Can't he use a better way to deliver compliments?

"So who is the killer?"

"Use logic to slowly work out a conclusion" He says slowly, "You can try."

Jian Yao thinks for a while and shakes her head:. "I'm still confused."

Bo Jinyan : "Alright. Time for another lesson."

Jian Yao: "..... Thank you. So where do we start?"

"Get a pad and a pen." He orders.

-

"First." He says. "It's a homicide. But is it not a premeditated, or acted in a spur of the moment?"

Jian Yao thinks aloud: "It's the first time they have come to the Orange Hill Resort. It's just undergone renovations. Nobody is familiar with the place. If it was a premeditated murder, the killer should choose a location he/she is more familiar with."

"Bingo. We can begin!" Bo Jinyan looks down at the paper in her hand, "Write down the second question? How many people entered Wang Wan Wei's residence that night?"

They are sitting side by side on the bed. The pen and paper are on her knees. They are sitting so close that she can smell his aftershave. But what is intriguing her more are the questions he has for her, one after

another, pulling her in a different world. The world of criminal psychology.

"One." She replies, "Wang Wan Wei is relatively petite. If there's two people, for example Manager Lin and Shen Dan Wei, it should be easy to pin her down, and she won't have had the chance to escape out of the villa. It also appears she's been to more than one place, therefore it's highly unlikely that the culprit will bring her to several places."

Bo Jinyan gives a small smile. Jian Yao asks with apprehension: "Am I Right?"

"Yes." Bo Jinyan says, "after all, you are petite like Wang Wan Wei, so if you put yourself into her shoes, it's easy to get to this answer."

Jian Yao: "... Let's continue." Bo Jinyan always comments she is petite, when in fact she is not that small. 165cm is a pretty good height for a woman. But of course, anyone is will be petite next to a six foot three guy!

"Which door did she escape from? Front or back?" He asks.

Jian Yao suddenly feels a hint of pressure. - How can you tell?

"Back door." Bo Jinyan suddenly interrupts her thoughts:. "Stop! If you take more than 10 seconds to answer a question, you are too slow... "

Jian Yao looks at him. She doesn't care about his comments, She just want to know which door is it.

"Back door." Bo Jinyan answers, "If it is the front door, Mai Chen's residence is the closest."

— — — —

After clarifying these points, Jian Yao's starting to put the pieces together.

That night, the person controlling Wang Wan Wei comes to see her. They have a fight for some reason, perhaps Wang Wan Wei wants to seek a new life and escape from his/her grip. So the person killed her out of anger and fear that his/her secret will be out. The person may have blocked the direction to the front door, so she escaped from the back door.

"Question4: After she runs out of her residence, why would she not run downhill but up the slopes towards the other residences?"

Jian Yao quickly blurts out: "She was seeking help from the other colleagues."

Bo Jinyan asks her: "Who is the first person she went to?"

Jian Yao thinks for a while. Her 10 seconds limit is up, Bo Jinyan gives her a hit on the head and says 'Stop' again.

"Remember, Zhou Qin's expression?" He says lightly.

Jian Yao touches her head: "yes...?"

"It was guilt." Bo Jinyan says, "When we told him we found Wang Wan Wei's earrings in his back courtyard, there's no shock, no fear, just guilt ... on his face"

Jian Yao is beginning to form a view in her mind. But surely, he's not that kind of person.

"Why is he guilty?" Bo Jinyan asks.

Jian Yao: "Because he ignored Wang Wan Wei's request for help?"

Bo Jinyan : "Can there be any other explanation?"

-

2am.

Jian Yao asks: "If Zhou Qin is not the killer, and given he is a well known "Mr.Nice", why won't he help Wang Wan Wei?"

Bo Jinyan replies: "One thing at a time. You will find out the motives and reasons later. Let's focus on facts, evidence and logic first."

Jian Yao nods: "That makes sense."

" According to Wang Wan Wei's escape route, Zhou Qin's front door is closest from her residence. She must have knocked on his front door first, but Zhou Qin didn't let her into his residence."

Bo Jinyan continues: "Okay, if it was you, it's raining and it's late at night. He didn't open the front door, maybe he was asleep, would you go around to knock on the back door? Or find someone else to help?"

Jian Yao replied: "Of course I would go find someone else.. The front door is located closer to the bedroom. If he is asleep, the chances of waking him up from knocking on the back door is even slimmer."

"Then why is her earring in his backyard?" Bo Jinyan asks.

- There are no traces of struggle, the earring is inside the back courtyard, which means at some point, she was in the backyard. By why would she go there?

A thought comes to her. Wang Wan Wei should be running to Pei Ze / Quin Yu Wen for help. Why would she go into Zhou Qin's backyard?

"Stop." Bo Jinyan 's deep voice interrupts her again.

Jian Yao looks at him.

- She is starting to think that Bo Jinyan enjoys "Stopping" her?

Bo Jinyan takes a sip of tea, and says: "There are only two possibilities. One, she entered the backyard herself, or two, the killer brought her there. But why would the killer bring her there? So the former is more probable."

Bo Jinyan continues: "How she entered the backyard also has two possibilities. One, from the outside. She walked into the courtyard after going around the residence. Two, she is getting out of the residence. If she is being chased, the chance of her running into a 'no exit road' is extremely low. Therefore I believe she was getting out of Zhou Qin's residence."

Jian Yao can't believe what she is hearing.

"Yes, this is the only explanation.' says Bo Jinyan , " She escaped from her back door. First, she knocks on Zhou Qin's front door. Zhou Qin didn't know what's going on, so he let her in. But the killer was not far behind. He/she caught up with her very quickly. For some reason, Zhou Qin decided to keep himself out of it. So our poor victim escaped through the back door for the second time, accidentally dropping her earring in the backyard as she was leaving."

-

Jian Yao is marvelled. How did Bo Jinyan unravel all the details from the small amount of evidence they gathered. It is as if he was present on the night, watching the events unfold.

"OK." This time he has a pleasant smile on his face, "Where did she go next?"

Jian Yao: "She ran to Lin Yu Xuan and Shen Dan Wei's residence."

"Why?"

"..... to seek help, of course?"

"So the murderer is....?"

Process of elimination. It's not Mai Chen, not Zhou Qin, not Lin Yu Xuan or Shen Dan Wei...

Bo Jinyan : "The hair is probably caused by the struggle between our killer and Wang Wan Wei. She ran to Manager Lin and Shen's residence, but like Zhou Qin, they chose to ignore her plea for help."

Jian Yao is biting her lower lip.

"Why?" Jian Yao slowly asks, "Murder is a felony. Why would the whole division withhold information and not lend a hand?"

Bo Jinyan glances at her: "You finally ask a good question."

He takes out a report from a folder: "I told you before. I like to take short cuts when I am investigating. Remember the hair I got from Pei Ze? I asked Yin Ziqi to collect hair samples of everyone else in Customer 3 Division for testings."

Jian Yao takes a look at the report. She is shocked to see the results. Except for Mai Chen, everyone tested positive for taking drugs. .

Bo Jinyan : " Lin Yu Xuan and Shen Dan Wei changed the sleeping arrangement not because they needed to work on a proposal together, but to take drugs together."

Shortly after Mai Chen's confession to Wang Wan Wei, he was 'so tired' that he fell asleep until the next morning. My guess is that someone put a sleeping pill in his water in advance. With him out of the way, they can all have one happy party."

Pei Ze and Qian Yu Wen. Sex and drugs. Perhaps he is already intoxicated when he went to find Wang Wan Wei. "

"But can't it be Qian Yu Wen?" Jian Yao asks.

"It's obvious from how they relate, Pei Ze is the dominant one and Qian Yu Wen the submissive partner. Besides, from Wang Wan Wei's diary, she said she was tempted into doing the wrong things. Pei Ze's age appearance, sexual orientation fits the profile of the seducer more than Qian Yu Wen."

In addition to this, Lin Yu Xuan and Pei Ze's relationship seems to be more than just colleagues or friends. But from her shocked reaction today, she did not know that Pei Ze is bisexual.

In Wang Wan Wei's diary, she mentioned that she offended Lin Yu Xuan. She probably saw the two of them together, but this silly girl didn't join the dots. This also explains, why Lin Yu Xuan decided to cover up for Pei Ze.

As for Shen Dan Wei and Zhou Qin, if Wang Wan Wei didn't die, the secret that they are doing drugs will be disclosed. So they decided to keep quiet, and let her die.

He spoke fast, like water spilling out from a glass. Finally, he asks Jian Yao " So, rookie! What's our conclusion?"

At this point, Jian Yao's mobile rings.

It's Officer Huang. "Assistant Jian, we have their confessions....."

"Culprit is Pei Ze." Bo Jinyan says softly "except for Mai Chen, the rest are all accomplices."

"Culprit is Pei Ze, Qian Yu Wen, Lin Yu Xuan, Zhou Qin and Shen Dan Wei are accomplice." Officer Huang says over the phone, just one second after Bo Jinyan gave her the answer.

Chapter 30

Jian Yao puts down the phone. She looks at Bo Jinyan.

He is still sitting on the bed, He leans forward and rests his arm on his lap, interlocking his fingers. His face flashes a relaxed smile.

He looks extremely pleased with himself...

Jian Yao has to admit: "Wow, you are good."

- Actually, he is more than just 'good', he's awesome.

But he doesn't seem to be touched by her compliments. He lies down on the bed, put his eye mask back on, and goes back to rest. To him, this is a simple and easy to solve case. There is nothing to rave about. This is a case of logical deduction. It's not even in his area of specialty - criminal psychology, serial killers etc.

Jian Yao says: "Don't sleep. Officer Wang has invited us to oversee the interrogation process."

"I am not going." He simply answers, "My work is done. The rest is up to them."

-

Jian Yao heads over to the conference centre by herself.

She follows Officer Wang into a room that they are using as their control room. Inside the room, two officers are observing several computer monitors, which are transmitting video images from the rooms where the Customer 3 division staffs are being questioned.

Jian Yao sits down in front of the monitors. She sees a number of familiar faces.

Lin Yu Xuan, Zhou Qin, Shen Dan Wei, Qian Yu Wen and Pei Ze.

They are arranged in separate rooms. The police are recording their testimonies. Everyone looks weary, except for Pei Ze. He looks disinterested, as if he doesn't give a damn to what has happened.

Jian Yao remembers the times they spent together. She is repulsed by his actions and attitude.

When the policeman throws the testimonies of others in front of him, he momentarily loses his composure. He looks flustered. But soon, he recollects himself.

"Whether you confess or not, we have enough evidence to charge you." says the policeman.

Pei Ze is silent for a moment. He asks: "What is the penalty for murder?"

Police replies: "That's a matter for the courts to decide. But they will show more leniency to those who confess."

"Ah....."

-

When did it all start?

Long before Wang Wan Wei joined, Customer 3 division was already a drug house. Wang Wan Wei was like a small fresh flower planted amongst the decaying vegetation. She was totally unaware of what's going on.

But their private lives were quite separate from their work lives. And there should have been no intersection between the two. They were not short of money. They kept to themselves and were very careful around others. The good kids like Mai Chen and Wang Wan Wei lived in a different world from them.

Until that night.

Pei Ze and Lin Yu Xuan were wantonly indulging themselves in the conference room.

"It doesn't matter. No one will come." He said, "Xuan, I want you here, in this very room that you use for telling me off during work hours."

Lin Yu Xuan is a capable and shrewd woman. But she is only a woman after all. Her husband was a professor in a music college. He fell in love with his female student that's twenty years younger than him. He walked out from their marriage while she was still pregnant. Lin Yu Xuan was devastated. She aborted the child to start a new life. But life had stagnated since then. She was not able to move on.

Then Pei Ze appeared in her life. They worked together, dined and wine together. She knew this attractive young man had ulterior motives. But she was too lonely, and too fragile to resist.

- He must have some feelings for me too, right? Otherwise... There are many other women in managerial positions. But he came for me.

When exactly did she fall in love with Pei Ze? She was not sure. Initially, she looked at it as a deal. He provided the love and comfort she desired. In return, she used her position and power to help him advance in his career. A fair trade.

But when Pei Ze was ready to move on from this relationship, she didn't want to let him go. She couldn't bear to live without him. Her successful career did not fill the emptiness in her life. The loneliness was too much for her to bear.

But it was not hard to keep him, as long as he was still working in the company.

So their relationship continued. She turned a blind eye to his debauchery - nightclubbing, casual sex with other girls... And he lured her into drugs. Cannabis. Sweet but painful. In the end, it's hard to say who is the dominant one in the relationship? Is it Pei Ze? Controlling her with a steady supply of drugs? Or is it Lin Yu Xuan? Using her power and influence in the company to keep him close to her. The line was blurred. No one knew the answer.

That night, as they were busy enjoying themselves, someone opened the door to the conference room. They even heard a gasp.

But the person retreated very quickly.

Pei Ze quickly put on his pants, opened the door slightly and looked through the gap: "Yes, it's Wang Wan Wei. The lock is broken. We didn't notice that just now."

From then on, Lin Yu Xuan was worried Wang Wan Wei would one day expose her shameful deeds in front of others. Though Pei Ze insists that Wang Wan Wei didn't see their faces, she would be happy to see

her go. It was too risky to have her around. She started to pick on the innocent girl all the time. And surprisingly, she started to enjoy seeing her suffer. After all, a young girl just starting out in life should also learn that life is not an easy and smooth journey.

.....

"This is the reason you and Lin Yu Xuan lured her to the path of drugs?"

Pei Ze smiles: "In the beginning, it was Yu Xuan's idea for me to sound her out."

To find out how much she actually knew about their affair. It was during the time when Wang Wan Wei felt down and discouraged because of her situation at work. To Pei Ze, she was like a little rabbit. Meek and weak, evoking a man's innate urge to conquer.

One night. Pei Ze and Wang Wan Wei had a lot of wine. They were drunk. She was lured into a sexual relationship with him.

The first time Pei Ze asked Qian Yu Wen to join them, Wang Wan Wei refused. But eventually, she gave in to Pei Ze's request. She was too timid to resist him.

Their threesome relationship went on for a while. She knew Pei Ze and Qian Yu Wen were drug addicts. But she had no idea her other colleagues were taking drugs too. She never would have guessed that her life was lost because these people would disregard her plea for help.

Lin Yu Xuan vaguely knew about Pei Ze and Wang Wan Wei's relationship, but surprisingly, she didn't seem to care.

-

"How did Shen Dan Wei become a drug addict?" The police asks. Who knows? Is Shen Dan Wei going through the same ordeal as Wang Wan Wei?

"Her?" Pei Ze laughs: "She is the first to take drugs in the division. She was led astray by her boyfriend when they were attending university. Later, the man left her to return overseas. Only then did she realise he was married."

Shen Dan Wei. Her dreams of marrying a rich foreigner were shattered. She couldn't shake off her addiction, so she frequented bars and nightclubs. Pei Ze and her met in a drug party once. They nodded and smiled to one another.

"She helped me clean up the traces of my crime." Pei Ze says, "Everyone helped. They are all accomplices, right?"

— — — —

Just like Bo Jinyan predicted, Pei Ze went to see Wang Wan Wei after Mai Chen left.

She refused, threatened to call the police.

Pei Ze was heavily intoxicated. Out of anger, he decided to kill her.

"Qian Yu Wen's drugs... Are you the supplier?" The police asks.

Pei Ze gives a faint smile: "He asked me for it. But I did not introduce him to the habit."

Qian Yu Wen's reason for taking drugs was boredom. He's simply looking for physical stimulant to spice up his life. As for his taste for men, he discovered it after he became a drug addict. Life is short. He decided to let himself loose and enjoy life the way he wanted to.

— —

But all these were hidden from their outwardly normal lives. They were not stupid. No one wanted to lose their job because of drug abuse. Perhaps, this is a road of destruction, but the end is still a long way off. There's no hurry to take a U turn at this time. Later, perhaps. Later.

Between each other, not everything was disclosed. Pei Ze was the only one who knows who were into drugs too. Qian Yu Wen was with him all the time, so he had an idea of what's going on. But the others, they did their own thing.

Shen Dan Wei is a loner. The others might have guessed that she took drugs. But it's none of their business.

As for Pei Ze and Wang Wan Wei's relationship, no one was aware of it until the night of the murder.

And Mai Chen. He's the law abiding and honest young man that didn't pose a threat to his seniors at work.

"Why then, is Zhou Qin taking drugs?" The police asks, "Same reasons as Qian Yu Wen?"

"Oh" Pei Ze laughs, "His drug habit has nothing to do with me either."

Zhou Qin and his wife met in university. They fell in love with each other. But their romance was short lived. They broke up because of some misunderstanding. However, they still had each other in their hearts. They reunited after a few years and Zhou Qin was the happiest man in the world. But his happiness didn't last long again. She died in a car accident.

Leaving behind a son. Every time he saw the child's face, he agonised over the death of his dear wife. He couldn't concentrate on his work. Once he almost lost his job because of his carelessness. It was drugs that held him together. It gave him a new lease of life.

He knew it's the wrong path. He thought he could get away with taking small dosages for a short period of time and not get hooked. By the time he realised, he had gone too far. He deeply regretted his actions and had started rehab. However, it's not easy to cut off the addictive habit. So he's had a few relapse every now and then.

Pei Ze knew everyone's secrets, so he made them cover for him. Everyone knew that if the murder was discovered, they will be brought back to the police station for a detailed interrogation. All their dirty laundry would be exposed. They might get fired. Nobody wanted to lose their jobs. Besides, Wang Wan Wei intended to commit suicide in the first place.

But today, the truth that they tried so hard to cover up, is finally revealed.

.....

"How could you do this to a young lady? Where is your conscious?" The police asks each one of them.

But silence is the only answer he gets.

-

When Jian Yao leaves the conference centre, it's three o'clock in the morning. It is still dark, as if the sky is covered by a thick layer of black ink. Jian Yao walks down a long and brightly lit corridor. She stops beside a window and looks out.

A lot of people come to her mind. Her father, Li, Bo Jinyan, and many others.

Everyone will encounter confusion and temptation at some point in their life. It may be hard and painful. But that is not the reason to forsake morals and principles. Life is more than indulging in selfish desires and feeling good, it's about doing the right thing.

She opens the door and walks in the room. She expects to find Bo Jinyan sleeping, but to her surprise, he was standing in front of a mirror. He is doing up the buttons of his jacket, as if he's about to attend a formal meeting.

Jian Yao walks up to him and asks suspiciously : "Are you going somewhere?"

Bo Jinyan turns to look at her: "Let's get on with the real reason we are here today."

Jian Yao is confused.

Before she could ask any questions, he walks out of the room with a solemn face.

— — —

Jian Yao sits in the backseat of the car, beside Bo Jinyan. He is looking out of the window with an infrared telescope. The rain has stopped. The car drives into a narrow and windy road. It brings them back to the residences they visited earlier. The crime scene is pitch dark. All the lights in the area have been turned off.

There are two other police officers in the car. They are keeping their eyes on a monitor inside the car. It is linked to the video cameras placed around the complex that shows all the paths that leads to the residences.

Bo Jinyan puts down the binoculars. He is sitting there, deep in thought.

Jian Yao cannot contain herself any longer : "You did so much... to lure him here?"

That man.

Bo Jinyan replies lightly: "Why do you think I agreed to take on something as dumb as a secret investigation? Not to mention coming back to this boring place? "

Is that the reason he agreed to help Yin Ziqi? He planted his move - secret investigation means there would be no police involvement, giving the person an opportunity to leave more signs for him.

"But you said you enjoy seeing the murderer shamed?" Jian Yao asks.

"Yes, I did enjoy that, but it's not a good enough reason for me to make all that effort."

The numbers written in blood comes to her mind. Suddenly, she is all tensed up.

"How do you know that he will be here?" She asks.

"He will. He will come... for me."

Chapter 31

"He will come... for me."

A sentence said without emotions. But in Jian Yao ears, the words are like the sound of war drums hitting her heart.

She turns around and looks at him. In the dim light, she can faintly see him. His handsome face looks calm and collected.

Jian Yao remembers the scars that lie on his back. What sort of experience and pain does he carry with him?

And when he first returned to China, Jian Xuan said he was so skinny he looked like a walking skeleton.

Were any of these things related to the Flower Cannibal?

Fu Ziyu mentioned it was the last case he worked on before returning to China. He caught the notorious criminal, who is now serving a life sentence in the United States.

But during the process, did he put himself in danger?

This smart, naive and arrogant man that is next to her.... Did he suffer unmentionable cruelty and abuse?

.....

"Teach him a lesson." Jian Yao says softly.

This man came in the name of the Flower Cannibal. He must be either a follower or an accomplice of the hideous monster.

Bo Jinyan is looking through his binoculars. He stares out of the window, moving his lips: "You don't have to remind me." He answers haughtily.

Jian Yao asks: "He arrived at Sun Yong's house before us. If he turns up today.... how does he find out what you are up to and where you will be?"

Bo Jinyan puts down the binoculars. He says with a cold smile: "That's obvious. He stalks me."

Jian Yao suspects that might be the case. Nevertheless, it is still creepy to hear it.

He continues: "Both the FBI and Chinese police have sent their men to surveil me. Yet, they failed to notice his presence. He must be very good at lurking in the shadows."

Jian Yao stays silent for a moment, then asks: "? So Was our office bugged?"

Bo Jinyan: "Yes, it was. The listening devices were underneath our chairs."

Jian Yao is astounded.

When did Bo Jinyan know about this? So he used it to his advantage to set up this trap? But he pretended he didn't know anything about it.

"Why didn't you tell me earlier?" She whispers softly.

Bo Jinyan glances at her: "Tell you? Would you be able to act 'normally'?"

"Of course. And I would have been more prepared."

"I am here. What other preparations do you need?"

-

Darkness still covers the sky. The damp paths leading to the residences are quiet. Besides Bo Jinyan and Jian Yao, there are two other policemen in the monitoring vehicle. There are also numerous officers hiding in the area. The streets are empty, except for two cleaners who

are sweeping the streets in the early morning hours. Everything seems normal.

Jian Yao feels heavy headed and dizzy. Her nose starts to run, and her throat is dry.

A cold. Probably from being cold and wet in the rain earlier.

Well, at least she is prepared. She takes out some flu medication. She also has a small box of tissues. She blows her nose.

Bo Jinyan turns to look at her briefly and then returns to his monitoring.

Jian Yao is very tired. She taps on his shoulders : "I am going to take a snooze. Call me if anything happens."

"Ok."

-

Their car is one of the maintenance vehicles of the Orange Hill resort. So it's not conspicuous when parked on the side of the road. The back of the car is quite roomy, but there are no in-built seats. The chairs Bo Jinyan and Jian Yao are sitting on are added temporarily.

It's 4am. No signs of the man they are after.

After a while, Bo Jinyan feels some weight on his shoulders. He turns his head and finds Jian Yao leaning towards him. Her head rests on his shoulder. Her eyelids closed against the dim lights inside the car, and her breathing deep and relaxed.

Bo Jinyan frowns. He adjusts her sleeping position so she is leaning on the back of chair instead. But it only takes a few minutes for her to flop on his shoulders again.

This is not Jian Yao's fault. The flu medication contains antihistamine which helps the taker to sleep more soundly. It is uncomfortable to sleep on the chair, especially when it's not padded. Bo Jinyan's shoulder is like a comfortable 'pillow' in comparison. Women, even in their sleep, have an instinct for choosing the better alternative.

Bo Jinyan looks down at her. Her hair is touching the side of his face. It's soft and rather comfortable. But as she breathes, he can feel her warm breath on his neck. It's ticklish.

A few minutes later -

Bo Jinyan rubs his hands together and does a quick stretch. He sits back on his chair, picks up the binoculars and stares out of the window.

The young office looks at him and asks hesitantly: "Professor Bo. Assistant Jian is sleeping on the floor! Are you sure that's ok?"

Bo Jinyan takes a glance at Jian Yao.

He found a strip of thin blanket. So he spread on the floor and moved Jian Yao to lay flat on top of it.

"Yes, it's alright." He replies, "I'm sure she doesn't mind a bit of dirt on the floor."

Another half an hour has passed. There is still no sign of 'him'.

Bo Jinyan puts down the binoculars. He rubs his eyebrows with his finger as he looks down. He stops what he is doing.

Jian Yao has rolled over, curled up into a ball, like a cat. Her long black hair spreads out on the thin blanket. She is cuddling up next to him. She must be feeling cold.

And

He frowns again. Because she rolled to the side, her face is outside of the thin blanket. Her lips are so close to the floor it looks like she is about to kiss the dirt.

-

Jian Yao wakes up after a short nap. When she was half asleep, she could feel someone tickling her face and nose with a feather.

She opens her eyes and takes a look around.

She is lying on the chairs. Two chairs put together side by side. When did she lie down? And where's Bo Jinyan?

He is sitting on the floor.

He's back is slightly hunched, knees bent, in a cross legged position. One hand is holding the binoculars, still staring out of the window. The other hand is resting casually on the knee.

What a gentleman. Jian Yao is pleased, that he can be so thoughtful.

Jian Yao looks at his handsome face. Just as she is about to speak, she sees his hand that was resting on the knee reaches out towards her.

- What does he want to do?

His hand is getting closer. It stops in front of her face. Then he picks up a few strands of her long hair that is resting on the chair, and starts to circle them around his fingers.

And when the hair is strapped around his fingers, he lets go of the hair by flicking his finger.

Long hair falls from the sky, some strands brushes over her cheeks. No wonder she felt someone was tickling her.

Before long, he does it again.....

He seems to like playing with her hair. He does it for a while, then his hand will rest on his knee, then he comes back for her hair again... as he's looking out of the window with the binoculars in his other hand.

Jian Yao can't believe it.

Playing with her hair? How childish can he be? He is Detective, for goodness sakes!

She sits up and use her fingers to brush the hair that's messed up by him. Bo Jinyan hears movement behind him and turns around.

"You're awake." He says briefly and continues to monitor what's going on outside.

Jian Yao is about to pick up her binoculars when she hears the policeman in front says: "Someone is here."

There's a man riding a bicycle, coming closer towards them. He is wearing a red uniform, with a shop logo in the front of the shirt. It's a 24-hour restaurant.

Food delivery? But none of the residences are occupied. Besides, who would order takeaway at this time of the day?

Everyone, including the police officers in the other monitoring vehicles get ready for action.

When the man reaches an intersection. He stops. He gets off his bike and starts walking uphill with some delivery box in his hand.

"Professor Bo, leave it to us, we will approach him now." says one of the officers from another vehicle via a Walkie-talkie.

"Wait." Bo Jinyan says, "Just keep observing for now."

The police officer on the other end hesitates for a moment. He orders his men to be on standby.

The man walks toward one of the residences. It's the one Pei Zi stayed in.

He stops in front of the door. He takes a few containers out from the delivery box and leaves them in front of the entrance. Then he took a quick look through the window and walks off.

Jian Yao feels her heartbeat accelerating.

"Action?" Officer on the other end checks again.

Bo Jinyan gives a mocking laugh: "No. It's not him."

Everyone is surprised by his remark. He continues: "This is not right. It's the wrong residence."

Everyone is even more confused.

She thinks to herself: "Why is this the wrong house? Last time, he left a note in Sun Yong's house, This time, he's leaving a note in Pei Ze's residence. On both occasions, he appeared at the killer's house. That's routine. It's a trait of a psychopath."

Bo Jinyan explains: "No, he should appear in the victim's residence. For psychopath, the moment of death is of the most significance."

- So he should be leaving a note at Wang Wan Wei's house.

The delivery man has walked down the hill. The Police officer anxiously asks: "Professor Bo, this person is suspicious. Should we not arrest him first?"

"No, let him go." Bo Jinyan says, "He is sent by the man to test us."

As the delivery man disappears from their sight. Everyone quietly waits.

This is like a silent chess game between 'Him' and Bo Jinyan. One wrong move, and it's all over.

-

As minutes and seconds continue to drift away, the policemen are getting more and more anxious. They don't fully trust Bo Jinyan's analysis. Have they missed their opportunity? They are not sure.

The dark sky is slowly getting brighter. A thin fog covers the ground. Visibility is still low.

Another man comes on the scene.

One of the cleaner. They saw him working further away earlier.

He is sweeping the leaves on the road. He slowly makes his way closer to the residence.

Jian Yao looks through the binoculars- A small man. He seems quite sluggish and his pace is slow. He is wearing a hat which blocks most of his face. There's grey stubbles around his chin, and his skin is wrinkly. He should be at least fifty years old. His clothes are old, and so are his shoes.

With one hand holding the broom and a dustpan on the other, he is sweeping leaves and garbage. When he sees an empty bottle, he picks it up and throws it into the rubbish bin. His actions seem natural, like a task that he does all the time.

Everyone stares at him.

He slowly approaches the slope next to the residences.

He continues to sweep and clear rubbish in the area.

Everyone has the same query. - Is he going to Wang Wan Wei's residence?

He didn't. He left.

He takes the broom and walks back to the main road.

"Another false alarm." says a policeman.

"Soon, first light will appear." Another policeman says.

Jian Yao notices Bo Jinyan's binoculars are still following the cleaner. He's getting further and further away from them.

... Something is not right

"The cleaner. Something tells me he's not just a cleaner....." she murmurs.

Just as she finished murmuring, she feels warmth covering her back. She lifts her head. Bo Jinyan has put his arm against the glass. He is standing right behind her and looking through the same glass panel to the outside. His chest touching her back.

"What's wrong?" He leans in and whispers.

She is literally in his arms. She can feel his breath brushing past her ears. Both his pose and the itchiness from the breath is making her very uneasy. But she knows Bo Jinyan is not aware of how physically close they are. He is so focused on the case he will not be thinking about anything else. So she turns around and says to him: "Look at his..."

She stops.

The moment she puts down her binoculars is the same moment he puts down his binoculars and leans down to hear her answer.

Their faces are only inches apart from each other to start with. A moment of overlap. She feels her lips grazes pass a patch of soft skin, then it lands somewhere on his face that is slightly damp.

That's.....

His lips.

As she realises what has happened, her cheeks starts to burn. He seems a little stunned too. They are back to their original distance before their lips touched. Just inches apart. Quietly looking at each other.

.....

"What's wrong?" Bo Jinyan breaks the silence by repeating his earlier statement, as if nothing has happened.

"Uh" Jian Yao immediately replies, "Low income cleaners. I see them all the time. They usually keep the empty bottles so they can sell them later. But he threw them away...." She decides to pretend as if nothing has happened too.

Bo Jinyan grew up abroad, he's not familiar with Chinese cleaners' usual practice. Immediately, he picks up the walkie talkie: "Action!"

The officer on the other end hesitates: "Professor Bo, are you sure? He didn't even get close to the residences....?"

Another police interrupts him: "Professor Bo, look at the walls of the residences!"

Everyone looks up to the walls.

A chilling message has appeared on the wall.

The English words with meandering handwriting in blood red is projected onto the wall.

"I miss U so much, buddy"

Then they hear a loud bang. There's an explosion on the grass area the cleaner went past.

"The projector used to show us the phrase." says Bo Jinyan

Jian Yao looks around and see a silhouette of a man disappearing into the bushes.

All the police offices come out of their hiding. They are running in all directions and covering all the grounds. They are determined to find the cleaner.

Two policemen are about to leave when Bo Jinyan asks one of them to stay behind: "You stay here. I'll go."

Jian Yao is surprised - Did he not say arresting is the responsibility of the police? That he is only responsible for the intellectual stuff?

— — —

Jian Yao's is very worried. The policeman senses her anxiety and comforts her : "We have informed the Resort Securities. No cars or person will be allowed to enter or leave the Resort tonight. He can't get away...."

Jian Yao heart settles. No matter how cunning the man is, Bo Jinyan will be able to seek him out.

They will win the game after all.

-

However, the resort is very big. It's easier said than done to track down a person.

Dozens of police have dispersed, and Bo Jinyan has joined them to find this cleaner. There's not enough policemen to cover all the areas, so the perimeters of the Resort is left in the hands of the Resort securities.

Half an hour later. The sky has brighten up into a pale blue as the sun starts to rise.

Bo Jinyan is standing outside a small forest. He walks through the trees. After a few metres, he finds a red uniform at his feet. He walks a little faster, taking short and light steps.

After a while, he sees a pair of pants, a broom and a pair of shoes.

He frowns.

He sees a dwelling in front of him. It's the villa Yin Ziqi's is staying for the night.

This is no coincidence. The man deliberately came through this way.

He immediately takes out his mobile phone: " Tell the Resort Securities not to let any car out of the resort. Not even Yin Ziqi's car."

Immediately, the other side replies: "Professor Bo, a few minutes ago, Chairman Yin's car left from the west gate. The guards didn't stop it..."

Bo Jinyan swears loudly.

The others are confused: "Professor What are you talking about?"

Bo Jinyan did not answer them. He puts his phone away and walks towards the trees.

Yin Ziqi is wearing a skirt, with a shawl over her shoulders. Her eyes are shut and her face is pale. She is lying unconscious on the ground.

Yin Ziqi is supposed to be staying in the Luxury Suite. A number of bodyguards were with her. It should have been fool proof. Perhaps she left the suite for some reason, and was attacked by the man. He stole her car keys and drove away in her car.

Bo Jinyan checks her pulse to make sure she is alright.

He exhales a long sigh. Then he bends over and carries her in his arms.

Chapter 32

Yin Ziqi did not intend to leave the villa... until she received a text message from Bo Jinyan.

It's 4am in the morning. She was still awake because she knew her brother brought a lot of police officers with him to the resort. That was not part of their agreement, and she was a little annoyed.

But she didn't confront him straight away.

She knew he's always had a mind of his own. Besides, it's not appropriate to bother him at this critical moment.

She couldn't change what has happened, so it's better for her to let it go, so Bo Jinyan knows that he owes her a favour. All she needs to do is to wait. Wait for his explanation. Wait for his apology.

This is how a wise woman should treat a man, with grace and gentleness.

As she had expected, he sent her a text message: I am outside your villa. Come alone. I give you five minutes."

She couldn't help but laugh. His tone is so arrogant! Even when he is trying to explain himself.

Her assistant wanted to go with her, but she refused. She didn't want anyone else there when she is with Bo Jinyan.

The sky was still dark.

No one was at the entrance of the villa but she could vaguely see a man standing by a tree at the edge of the forest.

The man was in a black suit. Tall and slender. He had his back to her, so she couldn't see his face. But judging from the body shape and attire, it had to be Bo Jinyan.

She smiled and walked over to him: "This is not one of those occasions which you can get away with a simple apology.....Ah!" She let out a small scream. Because the man turned around and quickly pulled her into his arms.

His arm tightly wrapped around her waist. Her face was buried in his chest. Just when she wanted to speak, he pressed his lips on hers. At the same time, he used his other hand to cover her eyes.

"Oh..." The man gave a small laugh as he slid his tongue into her mouth. Yin Ziqi's body was trapped, her eyes covered. She struggled and he deepened the kiss.

- So that's what Bo Jinyan's kiss feels like. Cold, raw and powerful.

Before long, she lost consciousness.

— — — —

When Yin Ziqi opens her eyes again, she finds herself lying in her bed.

The lights are on. Bo Jinyan is sitting in a chair next to her bed. His eyes are dark and bright, staring thoughtfully at her.

— — — —

The news of Chairman Yin's attack has quickly reached the police, as well as Jian Yao.

She is on her way to Yin Ziqi's villa. Another police officer is with her.

Once she steps out of the car, she realises there is a lot of people surrounding the villa. Most of them are senior management staff from the company. Jian Yao is slightly surprised to see so many people there. She hears someone call her name.

It's the assistant from her previous division. The young lady that commented Bo Jinyan looked 'kind of ...vain.'

She looks at Jian Yao: "Why are you here with the police?"

Jian Yao gives a vague answer: "I just happened to meet them here. Why are you here?"

"Do you not know?" says the young lady. "Chairman Yin fainted in the forest. Luckily she was not injured. Director Bo carried her back to the villa. All the staff at the villa saw it."

Jian Yao: "I see... I am going to find Director Bo now."

The young lady is curious: "Where is everyone else from your division?"

Jian Yao smiles, but doesn't answer her.

She doesn't really care anyway. So she continues to tell Jian Yao some rumours she has heard: "Apparently, he looked very concern for Chairman Yin. Some people say he's Chairman Yin's boyfriend. You work with him. Any inside stories?"

Jian Yao takes a look at her: "Of course not. Don't speculate."

— — — —

Yin Ziqi's bodyguards are standing outside her suite. Her assistant greets Jian Yao. She is a woman in her thirties. She smiles at Jian Yao: "Chairman Yin is awake. Director Bo is with her. Come with me."

The master bedroom is at the end of a long corridor. The door is left slightly opened.

"Why did you kiss me?" They hear Yin Ziqi's voice.

Jian Yao is stunned.

- Did she hear correctly? A 'kiss'?

The assistant already has her hand on the door handle. But instead of pushing it, she pulls it to close the door. She signals to Jian Yao and they return to the lounge.

"Jian Yao, no matter what you heard earlier, it's the private affairs of the chairman. Please do not tell anyone else. You understand?" says the assistant.

Jian Yao: "... I understand."

She is confused. Why would Bo Jinyan kiss Yin Ziqi. She is his sister!

But in her heart, she can feel little flickers of pain.

— — — — —

In the master bedroom.

Bo Jinyan is sitting in the chair, crossing one leg over the other. He looks at his sister. She looks baffled.

He gives her a smile.

He has some softness in the eyes and gentleness in his smile. Looking at his handsome face, Yin Ziqi suddenly feels like her heart has skipped a beat.

Then she heard him say : "I am sorry, but my first kiss is still..." Then he pauses: "...emm.. not available anymore. But I have no desire to mess with my sister. Congratulations. It seems you kissed the Flower Cannibal No.2."

— — — — —

The sun is finally out. A golden glow covers the Orange Hill Resort.

Jian Yao is sitting by the window, in a daze.

“He” has fled. The police have issued a warrant for his arrest. Her colleagues from Customer 3 Division are escorted to the Police station.

There is nothing else for her to do. Except to wait. Wait for Bo Jinyan to appear.

Did he really kiss Yin Ziqi?

Then she remembers the words of the assistant from her previous department: “He looked very concerned for her.” ...

She has never seen him concerned or worried for any woman before. However, he seems to treat Yin Ziqi differently. After all, he obliged when she asked him to take up this simple murder case.

Perhaps... she is the one he’s secretly adored for years? She is the only woman by his side all these years. However, he suppressed his feelings because they are meant to be siblings?

She smiles bitterly.

As she is still deep in thought, Bo Jinyan walks in: “We are returning to B City tonight.” He sits down in a chair across from Jian Yao. His hands are tapping the armrests.

“Ah...” Jian Yao replies briefly. There’s nothing more for them to do here.

After a moment of silence, Jian Yao asks: “What actually happened to Chairman Yin?”

Bo Jinyan replies coldly: "He stole my mobile number and sent her a text message."

- Ah.. that's why Yin Ziqi left the villa. Fortunately, she was not injured.

He looks annoyed.

.... because he angry that Yin Ziqi is bullied by this guy?

She asks causally: "You kissed Yin Ziqi?" The question has been on her mind for too long.

Yes, that's the right tone. Like talking to a friend. She is just curious. That's all.

"Yeah..." Bo Jinyan leans back onto the chair. He closes his eyes: "At a critical moment of chasing after the Flower Cannibal No.2, I would take time to kiss my sister? Who do you think I am? Someone with no brains or moral standards?"

"So... you didn't kiss her?"

"Nonsense. That 'man' kissed her."

Joy is gushing out of her heart like a stream.

But then she remembers poor Yin Ziqi, kissed by a monster. No wonder Bo Jinyan is not happy.

As she is thinking about these things, Bo Jinyan suddenly says: "I only kissed one person today."

She feels her heart halts for a second.

- Is he referring to the 'accident'?

Jian Yao turns to look at him.

He opens his eyes and gives her a smile. A playful but arrogant one.

She blushes. Then her heart starts to pound like a rocket about to be launched.

What does this mean? That he cares about the kiss as much as she does?

Her heart is racing.

"Surely this is not your first kiss." He says with his low magnetic voice.

Her face is red with embarrassment. But she tries to sound calm: "So what if it is? It's your first kiss too, right? At the age of 26."

It's his turn to look stunned.

"Don't worry." He stands up, "In the future, when you have a boyfriend, he won't know about this. Let's go."

.... When you have a boyfriend....

Jian Yao stands still for a while. When he has reached the door, he looks back, as if to hurry her up. She quickly picks up the luggage and makes her way to the door.

- Ah... Query solved. She is not special to him after all.

— — — — —

The next morning, Jian Yao gets a call from Bo Jinyan: "We need to head down to the Police Station, to look at some evidence."

Jian Yao is not sure why they need to go there, but who is she to say no.

Bo Jinyan asks again: "What are we having for breakfast?"

"Sorry, I didn't have time to cook anything." She didn't sleep well after last night's saga.

They decide to have congee in a little shop close to their apartment block.

Jian Yao seems to be a bit more pensive than usual. Bo Jinyan looks at her: "You are very quiet today. Is everything ok?"

Jian Yao didn't want to explain: "Uhh... just not fully recovered from my cold."

"Oh." Bo Jinyan answers.

— — — —

Inspector Wang shows them to a reception room. He takes out two pieces of evidence: Pei Ze's mobile phone and a bag of...hair?

"Take your time. I will be back soon." He walks out, closing the door behind him. They are the only two people left inside the room.

Bo Jinyan picks up the mobile phone. He fiddles with it for a while. Then he passes it to her: "This one?"

Jian Yao takes a look. It's the picture Pei Ze took of her at his house.

Bo Jinyan deletes the photo from his phone.

Jian Yao asks: "This is the reason we have come to the police station? Just to delete a photo?"

He looks at her: "Whatever I have promised you, I will keep my word. No matter how trivial it is."

"....thank you."

Then he picked up the bag of hair. Within the big plastic bag, there are many little bags with a few strands of hair in each. Some of them are labelled. Some are not.

Jian Yao asks: "What is this?"

Bo Jinyan is going through the bags as if he is looking for something: "Remember the calligraphy brush in Pei Ze's house?"

"Yes..."

"It's made from hair. Women's hair." says Bo Jinyan. "His house has no calligraphy or paintings. There's not even a trace of ink in the house. Yet a brush is displayed in an expensive box in the cupboard. And he told you he practises calligraphy... We took the brush for analysis. The results show that it's made from hair from women. They are from women that he had a love interests with previously. He collects their hair... as souvenirs."

Bo Jinyan finds a bag with her name on it. "Take this. It's yours."

Jian Yao is disgusted. "No, I don't want to touch it."

"OK." Bo Jinyan puts the little bag back to the pile.

"No!" She shouts: "I don't want to leave it here either."

"So, do you want it or not?" Bo Jinyan smiles. He is just teasing her.

"Take it away." Jian Yao commands.

Bo Jinyan smiles at her and puts the bag into his pants pocket.

Once they got out of the Police station, Jian Yao walks to a convenience shop next door to buy a cigarette lighter. She passes the lighter to Bo Jinyan. He takes out the hair, and burns it. Soon the strand of hair has turned to ash, blown away by the wind.

— — — —

They are on their way to Yin Ziqi's office.

She thinks of what Bo Jinyan has done for her.

He did not forget. Even when it's only a photo, a strand of hair.

Why is he so nice to her?

He said Pei Ze is obsessed with women's hair. She wonders what was going through Bo Jinyan's mind when he was playing with her hair.

If he has no feelings for her, why is he so nice to her?

Perhaps, there is no gender difference in his mind? She is just a good friend, like Fi Ziyu .

"What's wrong with you today?" Bo Jinyan asks again.

"I'm tired...." She closes her eyes and turns her head away.

— — — —

Yin Ziqi's has had a frantic morning.

The entire Customer 3 division has collapsed. The news has travelled to all the departments. She is working hard to minimise the damage done

to the reputation of the company, as well as organising staff to take over the work from the collapsed division. She has no time to think about the kiss, or her feelings for Bo Jinyan.

“Let’s keep this short.” She says: “Bo Jinyan, for the records, you are fired. For incompetence. The division collapsed while under your administration.”

He smiles. Yes, that’s the best cover up.

Yin Ziqi looks at Jian Yao: “Thank you for your help with this investigation. As we have agreed, your involvement in the case will be kept confidential. As a token of appreciation, you can choose to work in any department within the company you wish to. However, the position will be based on your qualifications and experience.”

In her heart of hearts, Yin Ziqi does not want Jian Yao to continue to hang around Bo Jinyan. Now she is giving her a chance to advance in her career. It’s killing two birds with one stone.

“Chairman Yin... Thank you so much...” Jian Yao is surprised and touched by her offer.

“You deserve it.” Yin Ziqi answers.

But Bo Jinyan doesn't seem as happy: “That’s not necessary.” He interrupts her sister. “She is mine now. She will not be working for you anymore.”

...Mine? Jian Yao thought to herself.

Since yesterday, she has been heartbroken by his suggestive words and actions that obviously don’t mean anything to him. Now she is pushed to the limits by this last phrase.

What does he mean by 'mine'. Didn't he tell her earlier that he doesn't care if she has a boyfriend?

Jian Yao looks at him: "Sorry, I don't belong to you." Then she turns to Yin Ziqi: "Chairman Yin, can I have a think about it for a few days?"

Yin Ziqi senses there is something going on between the two of them. But she just answers: "Sure. I'll wait for your answer."

Chapter 33

Saturday morning.

When Fu Ziyu received Bo Jinyan's call, he was having a tennis game with an attractive lady. "Come over for dinner." Bo Jinyan said.

He was rather surprised by the call.

Since the multi talented assistant Jian Yao appeared in his life, Bo Jinyan seldom calls him anymore. There was even one occasion, where he tried to invite Bo Jinyan out for dinner, Bo Jinyan declined: "I won't go. Jian Yao has prepared dinner.... There's only enough food for the two of us. Don't come over."

What's happened to Bo Jinyan? Is he 'dumped' by Jian Yao?

This is more interesting than playing tennis with a pretty girl. So he excused himself quickly and went to Bo Jinyan's house.

— — — —

When he enters Bo Jinyan's apartment, Fu Ziyu finds him sitting on the sofa, reading a book.

Bo Jinyan takes a brief glance at Fu Ziyu and returns to his book.

Fu Ziyu sits across from him: "Where are we going?"

"Your call."

Fu Ziyu pours himself a cup of tea. Then he asks causally: "Should I ask Jian Yao to come along?"

Bo Jinyan turns over a page. Without lifting his head, he answers: "Whatever."

It's been a while since Fu Ziyu saw Jian Yao. He misses her. So he gets up from the sofa and heads to the front door.

When he's waiting for the elevator, he notices Bo Jinyan is next to him.

"Why are you following me?"

"Mmm... Just to take a breather." answers Bo Jinyan .

In the lift. Fu Ziyu looks at the numbers changing on the display panel, and turns around to look at Bo Jinyan . Take a breather? At a young lady's apartment?

— — — — —

The two men stand outside Jian Yao's apartment.

Fu Ziyu rings the doorbell again. No one is answering.

He turns to look at Bo Jinyan : "Well, princess is not home. Call her."

Bo Jinyan is looking at the peephole on the door, he sounds unwilling: "Why don't you call her?"

Something sparks in Fu Ziyu 's brain: "What's the matter with you two? Is she giving you the silent treatment?"

Bo Jinyan 's frowns. He looks at Fu Ziyu and but doesn't answer his question.

Somehow, seeing Bo Jinyan 'suffer' is quite a satisfying experience. Fu Ziyu smiles and takes out his mobile phone: "Hey, pretty girl. Where are you? O.. taking graduation photos..."

— — — — —

Fu Ziyu is trying to get the full story of what's happened while driving to the University.

"So... she has not seen you for two days?"

Bo Jinyan is obviously in a foul mood. He utters: "Yea..."

Fu Ziyu is enjoying this conversation: "She has not called you.... or come down to your apartment..."

"Yea..."

"She has declined your invitations to dine together... not even talking to you..."

There's a big smile on Fu Ziyu 's face. He is gloating over his misfortunes. Bo Jinyan looks at him: "You childish prick!"

Fu Ziyu laughs: "Who is the childish one here? Jian Yao is the most patient person I've ever known. You must have done something wrong to make her so angry. You should apologise to her."

It's Bo Jinyan 's turn to be silent.

Fu Ziyu thinks for a while: "No... you don't even know why she is angry with you?"

Bo Jinyan looks at him: "Of course I do. She is like a sheet of blank paper in front of me."

Fu Ziyu looks at him seriously: "So what is she angry about?"

Bo Jinyan rests his arm on the door handle. He thinks for a while: "She doesn't want to see me now, because she is choosing between me and Yin Ziqi."

He explains the situation and Yin Ziqi's offer to Fu Ziyu .

Fu Ziyu : "Ah... I see."

Bo Jinyan : "Obviously, she is under pressure, so she doesn't want to talk to me."

Fu Ziyu thinks for a moment: "Yes, it will be a hard decision for her. She's worked hard for a few years to get her degree. And you are asking her to forgo such a good opportunity for a job that's is physically tiring and mentally taxing. If it is me, I will choose Yin Ziqi's offer too."

Bo Jinyan remembers her words at Yin Ziqi's office: "I don't belong to you..."

She did not choose him at the time.

Fu Ziyu taps his shoulder: "Do you know what you should do now?"

"What?"

"Woman needs to be coaxed and pampered. If you don't want your assistant to run away, I suggest we'll do whatever she wants for the next

few days. Women are emotional creatures. If she feels touched, she will choose you.”

— — — — —

The summer flowers fill the gardens in the University campus. There are graduates everywhere, proudly walking around in their regalia. The nicely manicured ground provides a nice backdrop for photos.

Fu Ziyu parks his car on the side of the road. They look out of the window and see a group of girls sitting on the grass. The foreign language faculty is famous for pretty girls. Jian Yao is not the most outstanding beauty amongst them. But her long hair, elegance and poise still attract a lot of attention.

She is taking photos with her friends. They are posing like models in a magazine shooting. She has a sweet smile on her face.

The two men have not seen the energetic and lively side of her before. Fu Ziyu smiles: “This brings back memories of my student days.” He looks at Bo Jinyan. He has a smile on his face too.

Fu Ziyu asks: “I thought you hate woman who likes to pose.” When they were in university, a lot of girls were interested in Bo Jinyan. Some of them would deliberately walk past the boys or approach them, hoping he would take notice. Bo Jinyan refused to go out with any of them. He hates girls that try to make themselves look sexy. He just thinks they are pathetic.

Bo Jinyan says defensively: “She is so natural. You don’t have much of an idea what makes a woman beautiful. You should work on that.”

- Excuse me? Some of my ex-girlfriends are famous super models! But Fu Ziyu decides not to argue with him.

As some of her friends start to leave, Fu Ziyu says to Bo Jinyan : “Go and sit in the backseat.”

“Why?”

“You might scare her away. You are not in her good books right now.”

Bo Jinyan reluctantly moves to the back.

“Keep the window up!” He continues to instruct Bo Jinyan .

- Oh.. he is seldom so obliging. Fu Ziyu is very amused.

After the window is tightly closed, he waves and raises his voice: “Jian Yao!”

— — —

Jian Yao walks over to the car. She can see that someone is in the backseat. She pretends not to notice and says Hi to Fu Ziyu .

Actually, she is not deliberately trying to ignore Bo Jinyan for the past few days. She had to get ready for the graduation ceremony. And a lot of her friends are in town, so she’s been busy catching up with them.

But the truth is, she doesn’t want to see him anyway.

“Let go for a meal.” Fu Ziyu opens the car door for the lady: “I miss you so much!”

Jian Yao gives him a smile, and hops into the car.

— — — —

It’s the weekend. There are fewer cars on the road. Fu Ziyu ’s Lexus is driving at a nice and steady pace on the freeway.

Fu Ziyu puts the radio on. Often he sings along. Other times, he chats with Jian Yao. She asks him about his work at the hospital.

Bo Jinyan is very quiet. There's no sound coming from the backseat. It's as if he is not there at all. Jian Yao takes a peek at him in the rearview mirror. His handsome face looks calm and collected.

"Jian Yao, where do you want to go for dinner?" Fu Ziyu asks again.

"Oh... I don't mind. Why don't you decide." answers Jian Yao.

Mmm... why does she feel so uneasy?

She takes another peek at Bo Jinyan. He is staring at her through the rearview mirror. In fact, his eyes are fixed on her, following her every move.

- How long has he been staring at her?

She feels her face is blushing. She slides down the seat so that she would be out of sight for Bo Jinyan.

— — — —

They walk into a Cantonese restaurant. The waiter brings them to a table that can seat four people. A screen separates them from a nice outdoor garden. It's a chic restaurant.

As Jian Yao is sitting down, Bo Jinyan automatically takes the seat next to her. Like he usually does.

Jian Yao refuses to look in his direction.

Fu Ziyu passes the menu to Jian Yao. "You can do the ordering today."

Jian Yao is happy to oblige. As she is doing the ordering, the men talked about the Flower Cannibal No.2 case.

“There’s two types of soups today, They are served individually. What would you like?” says Jian Yao to the guys: “Mushroom or tripe?”

“Tripe.” says Fu Ziyu .

Without looking up from the menu, Jian Yao asks “What about Jinyan?”

“Mushroom.” Bo Jinyan says with a contented voice.

Jian Yao deliberately keeps her eyes on the menu. She is turning the page to see what else she can order. “What about you, miss,” asks the waiter :“Which soup would you like?”

She prefers mushroom. She is about to answer ‘Tripe’ when she hears Bo Jinyan telling the waiter: “She wants mushroom soup too.”

Fu Ziyu looks at the two of them. Jian Yao lowers her head even more.

Love is in the air. He smiles.

— — —

Jian Yao’s glass is empty. Fu Ziyu gives Bo Jinyan a nudge with his arm, then looks at the jug of orange juice on the table.

Before Jian Yao reaches out for the jug, a long and slender hand appears in front of her, and gets hold of the handle.

She watches Bo Jinyan pour her a glass of orange juice, then brings it to her.

“Enjoy.” he says.

Jian Yao takes a look at him: “Thank you.”

This is the first time he has served her on the dinner table. Usually, he is the prince that does not lift a finger.

She is a little puzzled about his unusual behaviour.

As she is preoccupied, Jian Yao is more quiet than usual. Fu Ziyu gives Bo Jinyan another signal with eye contact: Talk to her. You’ve offended her. Do you expect her to initiate a conversation?

Bo Jinyan gives him a nod. Just as Fu Ziyu thought he understands what to do, Bo Jinyan looks at the dish of steamed fish in front of him. He takes a fork and spoon and starts to fiddle with the fish.

Fu Ziyu is speechless. There’s an awkward silence. He gives up on Bo Jinyan and starts chatting to Jian Yao.

Jian Yao takes a glance at Bo Jinyan. It’s obvious that he does not share the same affections she has for him. It’s time to walk away.

Fu Ziyu’s phone rings. He takes the call. Jian Yao continues with her dinner.

Then there’s a tap on her shoulder.

She turns her head and sees Bo Jinyan pushing a bowl towards her.

She is stunned.

Fish.

It’s piled with fish. Tiny pieces of fillet, deboned and carefully piled into a bowl.

“Enjoy.” he says again, while giving his fingers a good stretch after the ‘hard work’.

Jian Yao looks at him. Many things are running through her mind. She looks straight into his eyes: “What are you trying to do?”

Bo Jinyan looks at her: “You can’t tell?”

Jian Yao shakes her head.

Is it just an illusion or Bo Jinyan is feeling a little warm because of the weather... His face looks like it’s a little red. Though his eyes are still giving his usual indifferent and slightly cold gaze.

“I am coaxing and pampering you.” he smiles.

Chapter 34

“I am coaxing you.”

Jian Yao is surprised by his answer. That’s not what she expected to hear. Sweetness poured into her heart. But almost immediately, it’s replaced by reason and logic, with a touch of frustration.

She turns around to look at him: “Coax me... to be your assistant?”

“Yeah.” He taps his hand on the corner of the table, leans forward to look at her.

- I knew it! Her lips curl into a bitter smile.

“Well, that’s not the only reason.” He suddenly adds.

She waits...

He stares at her. Bo Jinyan looks good in white. It brings out his nice skin complexion. His eyes looks clear and sharp.

"I think we should reconcile."

Jian Yao is speechless.

By now, Fu Ziyu has finished his call. He's been observing the two of them. He can't help but smile: "Nice job with the fish."

Jian Yao is poking her chopsticks in an empty bowl. She is not giving Bo Jinyan an answer.

Fu Ziyu takes a glance at Bo Jinyan: "Have some fish. Nobody forced him to debone it for you. He does not expect anything on return. Don't worry. Just because you eat some fish does not mean you agree to reconcile with him, or to remain to be his assistant. Right?"

"Hum..." Bo Jinyan asks coldly: "Whose side are you on?"

Fu Ziyu: "Jian Yao's of course. I've always been and will always be loyal to her!"

While the two men are bickering amongst themselves, she picks up a piece of the fish fillet with her chopsticks and puts it in her mouth.

It's very tender.

He spent half a day deboning the fish for her... till his fingers are tired.

This man....

— — — — —

Dinner is over. They are standing in the shade under a tree in the restaurant carpark. Fu Ziyu asks: "What should we do next?"

Jian Yao: "I need to go to the supermarket. I won't join you anymore."

Bo Jinyan stands next to her. He takes a look at her.

Fu Ziyu smiles: "Then we will accompany you to the supermarket. We are coaxing you, remember? Today, you are the Queen. We will follow Your Majesty anywhere. Is that right, Bo Jinyan?"

Jian Yao laughs: "Oh, Come on..." Bo Jinyan agrees with a low voice: "Yes, we will go with you..."

— — — — —

How often does a lady get to stroll the supermarket with two handsome and charming 'bodyguards'. She is attracting lots of attention today.

Fu Ziyu is clearly in a good mood today. He is playing his 'Queen's knight' role extremely well. "Your Majesty, which aisle should we take?" "My Queen, do you want this brand of salt?"

His charm manages to soothe her melancholy. She can't help but smile: "Oh, stop calling me that."

Bo Jinyan stands quietly by her side. From her peripheral vision, she knows that Bo Jinyan is always looking at her. She refuses to engage with him, so she keeps looking away from him. They don't talk to each other at all.

They come to the confectionary section. Jian Yao stops to replenish her stock. There's a young pretty lady promoting a new brand of biscuit. When she sees Jian Yao and the two men, she walks over with some samples.

Bo Jinyan will, of course, ignore her. But Fu Ziyu is too soft hearted to say no to a pretty girl. After trying the sample, he follows the girl to the biscuit section to get a pack.

There's only the two of them left in the confectionary section.

Jian Yao pretends to read the labels of the products.

Suddenly, she notices Bo Jinyan has walked off.

She takes a look around. He is not there anymore.

Her heart sinks.

Then she hears a familiar voice behind her: "Your majesty, here's your sugar-free lollies."

It's an item on her grocery list. He must have seen it and went to find it for her.

Jian Yao says to him: "Why are you following his lead? Stop calling me that."

Bo Jinyan puts the pack of lolly into her trolley: "No one is forcing me to do it. And I don't expect anything in return."

Jian Yao takes a look at his 'unwilling' face. She smiles and says: "I don't want apple flavour. I prefer orange."

Bo Jinyan reaches for the pack in the trolley: "Yes! Your majesty." He picks up the packet of lolly and return it to the shelf. Jian Yao watches him as he looks carefully at the labels to find what Jian Yao is after.

A tall man with bright eyes and strikingly handsome features, wearing a simple white shirt and a pair of black pants.

Yes, this is the man she likes.

Soon, he finds what he is looking for. He turns back and walks toward Jian Yao.

"Thank you." Jian Yao reaches out her hand, ready to take the packet of lolly from him.

He places it in her hand, but he doesn't let go. They are both holding the packet of lolly.

She looks at him. He takes a step forward to reduce the distance between them. He looks into her eyes.

"Reconcile?" He says in his deep melodic voice.

Jian Yao's face starts to blush. She tries pulling the pack a little harder. But he is not letting go. The packet of lolly is quite small. His fingers are touching the back of her hand. Jian Yao feels like there's small pulse of electricity coming through her hand.

Jian Yao gives a sigh. She surrenders.

Lifting her head, she smiles at him: "Alright. I have had enough of your nonsense. Let's make peace. I won't hide from you anymore. What do you want for breakfast tomorrow?"

Bo Jinyan eye's light up: "Whatever you want. My Queen."

Jian Yao just answers: "Let's go."

"Ok..."

She pushes the trolley towards the counter. He is following behind her. After a few steps, she feels something soft and warm touching her head. It's Bo Jinyan, he pats her head as he walks past her.

She pauses her steps.

- Yes, we have reconciled. Bo Jinyan, I like you, but you obviously don't share the same sentiment towards me. But I can't stay by your side as a friend anymore. What am I going to do?

— — — —

Since they have 'reconciled', Jian Yao takes some snacks and fruits she bought earlier to Bo Jinyan's apartment.

Bo Jinyan is taking a shower. Fu Ziyu is sitting in the sofa reading. When she enters the apartment, he smiles and signals her to come to sit beside him.

Fu Ziyu pours himself a glass of red wine. He asks Jian Yao: "Would you like some wine too?"

Jian Yao shakes her head. She walks to the kitchen and pours herself a glass of milk: "I'll take milk." She says to Fu Ziyu.

They quietly sit for a while. Then Fu Ziyu asks her: "You like Bo Jinyan, don't you?"

Jian Yao almost choked hearing those words. Her face turns red, and she starts to cough.

Fu Ziyu laughs at her, while gently patting her back to help her feel better: "Take it easy. I am on your side."

"I am not sure what you are talking about." says Jian Yao after she finally regains her composure.

Fu Ziyu: "Your secret is safe with me..."

Jian Yao does not deny anymore. She is a straightforward person in front of her friends anyway.

After a moment of silence, she says to Fu Ziyu: "Please don't tell him."

"Of course not. Men should always make the first move when it comes to courting." Then he pauses "Though, this might be difficult for Bo Jinyan."

"I don't think that's necessary. He has no feelings for me." Jian Yao says.

Fu Ziyu is stunned: "That's impossible!"

Jian Yao hesitates. Then she explains to Fu Ziyu why she has come to that conclusion. She feels a bit of her burden is lifted after getting it off her chest to someone.

She didn't expect Fu Ziyu to have such a reaction after hearing her out. Instead of consoling her, he has a 'I knew it' look on his face. He smiles: "You base your conclusion on those statements of his?"

Jian Yao argues: "Well, would you say to someone you like - "Go find yourself a boyfriend'?"

"Me? No.... But we are talking about Bo Jinyan! A genius with extremely low EQ. Besides he has never been in a relationship before. You know what he is like. In the inside, he's just an egotistic boastful kid."

Jian Yao can't help but agree with what he says: "Yes, that's so true."

Fu Ziyu continues: "So, even if you tell him you are getting married tomorrow. He will congratulate you and even write you a big cheque as

a wedding present. But it's not until he sees you in the arms of another man will he suddenly realise "Oh, how come she is not mine anymore?"

"

Jian Yao laughs at the suggestion. There's still a bit of bitterness and uncertainty in her heart. Can he be such an idiot when it comes to love?

Maybe...

"I've never seen him so concerned about a girl before." Fu Ziyu looks at her and says in an unwavering tone: " But that's Bo Jinyan. He is extremely talented, and a very good criminal psychologist. But he is also a loner. Someone that hates socialising. So, to be his friend, or lover, we need to take more effort to reach out to him. Looking back, it took me a long time to become his only friend. Now, as his best and only friend, I urge you to give him more time. I don't want him to lose out on such a lovely girlfriend."

— — — — —

It's a beautiful night. The warm summer breezes brushes over one's face as if to appease the restlessness in the heart.

Jian Yao looks up and meets Fu Ziyu's reassuring gaze.

Bo Jinyan walks out from his bedroom.

Without looking at him, his two guests raise their glass. Fu Ziyu says to Jian Yao: "To our alliance!"

Bo Jinyan stands behind them: "Alliance? What are you talking about?" He is wearing a white T Shirt and shorts. He looks at Jian Yao: "Why is your face so red?"

Fu Ziyu smiles.

Jian Yao stands up quickly and says her goodbye: "It's getting late. See you tomorrow."

— — — — —

The next morning.

Bo Jinyan wakes up feeling a little irritable. Jian Yao said they'd make peace, but she didn't even speak to him once last night.

This is the first time in Bo Jinyan's life that he is at someone's disposal. He's used to being the one in control - Where he works, his title, who works for him... No one dared to say no to him before.

- Perhaps, if he continues to coax her for one more day? She will agree?

He stands in front of the mirror. Then he hears the sound of the front door open.

He smiles. Time for breakfast.

When he enters to the lounge, he see Jian Yao sitting on the sofa. And his favourite fish dumplings... on the coffee table.

She is wearing a beige dress today. She greets him with a nice smile.

Mmm...that's what it ought to be every morning. His irritability has dissipated.

Jian Yao asks causally: "What do we need to work on today?"

Bo Jinyan smiles: "There's no urgent work at the moment. I'll... I'll get changed first. Then we will have breakfast together." He's obviously in a good mood. He sounds cheerful.

"OK." Jian Yao puts her head down.

- Oh Bo Jinyan. I have gone one extra step. I will wait here. Are you willing to come to me? But don't make me wait too long, I might get discouraged and turn my back on you....

— — — — —

Bo Jinyan whistles as he changes in front of the mirror. Then he gives Fu Ziyu a call.

Fu Ziyu congratulates him: "I will arrange for the contract. The usual term? Three years?"

Bo Jinyan: "Change it to ten years."

Fu Ziyu is a little surprised. Then he laughs: 'Your sister won't be too happy that you won this round.'

This reminds Bo Jinyan. He sends his sister a text message: "I am sorry. Jian Yao is mine now. - Yours, "The 'real' Bo Jinyan" "

YinZiqi did not reply to his text.

He returns to the lounge. Jian Yao is reading a book "The Guide to Behavioural Evidence"

His phone rings.

"Professor Bo. My name is Wang Xi." It's the inspector from Wang Wan Wei's case.

"Yes?" asks Bo Jinyan

"We found 'him...." He says heavily, "His body."

Chapter 35

Jian Yao is in front of his 'body'.

They are in a morgue that belongs to the Ministry of Public Security. A room with dull grey walls. A lifeless and cold room.

Though she thinks she is prepared, she is still repelled by the sight.

His body burnt into an unrecognisable charred corpse. The only conclusions they can make of the remains are that he is very tall, not too thin, but not fat either, which fits Yin Ziqi's description of him.

According to the police, his car went off the cliff during a high speed pursuit with the police. There was an explosion at the bottom of the hill.

"Is that 'him'?" Jian Yao asks Bo Jinyan.

During the hot summer days, Bo Jinyan usually wears a white shirt and pant without his jacket. But today, he has his full suit on. Even his shoes are nicely polished. It's a sign of respect for meeting someone for the first time, even though he's no longer alive.

He does not answer Jian Yao's question. Instead, he looks at the body for a few seconds, then he greets 'him with a small smile': "Hi."

His voice is mellow and soft.

Jian Yao is used to his unusual behaviour. But others are perplexed: "You know this guy?"

Before they get an answer, Bo Jinyan has walked out of the room.

— — — — —

The conference room of the Ministry of Public Security.

It's a meeting between the representatives from China and the FBI from the US. Bo Jinyan looks like a different person from the charmer who called her "Your Majesty" yesterday. Today, he is a professional with a sharp mind and distinguished capability.

Jian Yao sits quietly at the back with a few other supporting staff members.

One the side of the round table sits the reps from FBI. They share the results of the DNA testings: "We have successfully identified the deceased."

They project a picture of an Asian man on the screen. He is wearing a suit. He looks like he is in his late twenties.

"Jiang Hao. American born Chinese. IT engineer." FBI rep looks at Bo Jinyan: "Simon, you should be familiar with who he is."

Everyone is surprised by the statement.

Bo Jinyan replies with a mocking tone: "What an honour - He's one of the survivors I helped rescued from Flower Cannibal No.1."

— — — — —

Jiang Ho fits the profile drew up by the FBI. The physical attributes, his nationality, what he was wearing at the time of death (a match to Yin Ziti's descriptions)... He is a rich and intelligent expat that returned to China about 6 months ago. He had the means to stalk Bo Jinyan, and the ability to leave the clues at the crime scene.

What is his motive?

The FBI have come up with two explanations:

1. Post traumatic stress disorder prevented him from living a normal life. The mental illness turned him into an abuser.
2. Perhaps he was an accomplice of the Flower Cannibal from the start. He pretended to be one of the victims to escape from being arrested when the Flower Cannibal was captured by Bo Jinyan and the FBI.

— — — — —

At the end of the meeting, Jian Yao walks up to Bo Jinyan. He is still standing by the table, reading the document that contains information about Jiang Ho.

One of the FBI investigators comes over to Bo Jinyan: "Simon, good job." He gives Bo Jinyan a handshake.

They said they owe the success of this operation to Bo Jinyan. He successfully set a trap for Jiang Ho to step into. Without his help, they would not be able to identify him so quickly.

Jian Yao is happy for Bo Jinyan too. But Bo Jinyan just hangs a faint smile on his face. He does not show any signs of excitement, or relieve.

— — — — —

When they leave the Ministry of Public Security, it's past lunch time.

Bo Jinyan is very quiet. Jian Yao asks: "So, case closed? " She heard the FBI investigators discussing about booking their air ticket to go home.

Bo Jinyan: "Yes. Case closed...at least officially."

There seems to be more to his sentence. Jian Yao asks: "Are you saying Jiang Ho is not the person we are looking for?"

Bo Jinyan answers: "I don't know."

- That's true. His death is too sudden. It's hard to believe that it's all over. Just like that.

Bo Jinyan gives a smile: "Well, time will tell. If he is still alive, he will come back, won't he?"

Night. The moon is shining brightly in a cloudless and clear sky.

Jian Yao is in Bo Jinyan's apartment. She is reading a book in his study.

Since she has made up her mind to 'follow his footsteps', she is not losing any time to upskill herself.

However, she is only 'following his footsteps' in the area of work. But in the area of love...

- How will she know what's really in his mind?

"Why are you staring at me?" He asks without even lifting his head. He is reading a book in the other corner of the room. He seemed to be focusing on his reading. How did he know she was staring at him?

Jian Yao blushes and answers: "Mmm... just observing." After all, she is reading a book on behavioural evidence.

Bo Jinyan puts down the book he is reading. He looks into her eyes: "You can move into my apartment. You can stay in the study."

Jian Yao: "... I am not going to move in with you."

Bo Jinyan gives a slight frown: "My assistant should be by my side 24 hours a day."

Jian Yao is used to his self centred and unreasonable requests by now. She simply answers him: "I like to have my own space. Just call me when you need me."

He decides to drop the subject, but he is not happy that he is 'rejected' again. He gets up, loosens his tie and gets ready for a shower.

Just as he steps out of the study, he hears Jian Yao says: "Besides... when I have a boyfriend... in the future... I will be living with him, right? I can't be at your side 24/7."

Bo Jinyan stops and turns around to look at her. His icy gaze is making her slightly uneasy.

"Whatever..." He says in such a small voice that it's almost not audible. Then he walks off.

Jian Yao can hear the 'bang' of his bedroom door.

Jian Yao can't help but laugh. He started it by first asking her to find a boyfriend (after the accidental kiss). Now he can try and imagine what life can be like if she does have a boyfriend!

— — — — —

Jian Yao reads for a little longer. Then she remembers about what happened in the morning. She stands up and walks over to the book shelves. She pulls out the box that labelled "California Flower Cannibal".

It's the biggest of all the case boxes. She puts the box carefully on the table and takes out the content inside. It has a big folder inside, There are documents that explain why it was such a difficult case to

solve. There was no pattern to how he chose his victims. People of all ages, from different backgrounds and ethnicity can end up being his victim. Although he came from a broken family. He had his fortune from investing in the stock market. His wealth made it easier for him to conceal his crime.

Then there's information on all the victims. She picks up a few files randomly. There are some photos which are quite gruesome. She quickly moves to the next file. She sees a familiar name. Simon Bo, Bo Jinyan.

Bo Jinyan comes out from his shower. His hair is still wet. But he doesn't take too much notice. He is thinking about what Jian Yao said earlier. Obviously, he is less important than some ordinary guy that doesn't even exist yet. He is not happy about that.

He walks out to the lounge. Jian Yao also walks out from the study. She has the file in her hand. His name is on the cover of the file.

Bo Jinyan sits down on the sofa and turns on the TV. He is deliberately ignoring Jian Yao.

After a while, he feels someone sitting next to him. Jian Yao is pulling his sleeve. He turns around, and sees her beautiful eyes: "Can I have a look at your scars?"

"No woman has seen my body before." He answers. He continues to watch TV.

"But it's important." Jian Yao pleads with him, "I am your assistant, and it is related to the case. I have the right to inspect."

Bo Jinyan looks at her. He starts to unbutton his top. His eyes are still looking at the TV.

He takes off his top. The sight of his broad shoulders and muscular body is before her, she looks down to the middle of his sleek chest.

Below the chest, close to the heart, is a dark red scar. Further down, there's another long, slightly more shallow scar that lines his abdomen.

There's less scars in the front of his body compared to the back. But they look like wounds that implied life threatening injuries.

The images and words from the file she is holding in her hand flashes through her mind. In the file, it was recorded that "Simon disappeared for six months. When he was recovered, he was severely wounded, and suffering from hypovolemia and early signs of multiple organ failures. He was unconscious and cared for in the intensive ward for four days. The FBI eventually captured the Flower Cannibal based on information provided by Simon. He helped saved twelve other victims that were in captive with him at the time."

Jian Yao looks at him. He never mentioned about his past experiences. Tears form in the corner of her eyes.

"Have you seen enough?" He asks in a cold tone.

Jian Yao ignores the question. She reaches her hand out to touch the scar on his chest. The cold rugged surface is warmed by her finger tips.

- How deep is the wound? How much pain did he suffer?

Suddenly, she feels her hand is grabbed by his.

She looks at his hand, then gradually move her gaze up to his face. Is he...blushing?

She hears him say: "It's ticklish. Don't touch my scars."

Jian Yao thought she could hold her tears in. But when he said that, she can't help but smile. And the tears that she tried so hard to contain escapes down past her cheeks.

Bo Jinyan clearly does not expect her to cry either. He is stunned. He looks at her.

Jian Yao is a little embarrassed. She turns around to grab some tissues to wipe her tears.

"If I knew it would make you cry, I would never have shown you." Bo Jinyan says while buttoning up his shirt.

More tears stream down her face. Such a tender statement...

She takes more tissues. She knows he is still staring at her: "Don't look at me. Watch your TV program!" she says to him.

"Ok." He mutters and goes back to watching TV.

She sits down next to him. Her red eyes are still wet. She sniffles and clears her noses and throat. Phew...Ok...

Then she feels some weight on her shoulders. Bo Jinyan has put his arm around her.

Her whole body stiffens as he comes closer towards her.

"Don't cry." He says in a soft voice.

"..."

The pictures and sounds from the TV continues. There are no other movements in the lounge. Bo Jinyan's hand is still draped over her shoulders. She can smell the fresh clean scent of soap that lingers on his

body after his shower, and his warmth that's passed on to her because of their closeness.

How much time has gone by? Half an hour? Fifteen minutes? No one knows. No one is counting... The mobile phone in Bo Jinyan's pocket buzzes.

He retrieves his arm that was around her shoulders. Jian Yao gives a small quick stretch. She wished the phone never ringed and she could remain in his arms forever...

He didn't catch the disappointment in her eyes. He looks at the caller ID, and answers: "Hi, Fu Ziyu."

Fu Ziyu is asking Bo Jinyan about Jiang Hao. Jian Yao decides it's time for her to go back. She takes the file to return it to the study.

As she walks past Bo Jinyan, she says to him: "I'm going."

Bo Jinyan looks up: "Ok, bye."

On the other end of the line, Fu Ziyu says: "It's late. Jian Yao is still there?"

"Oh, she was crying just now. I was soothing (comforting?) her." Bo Jinyan says it like it's the most natural thing in the world.

(Note from TB: Re: translation for 'soothe' - The word used here in chinese is 哄, which is the same word Bo Jinyan used when he deboned the fish for Jian Yao. 哄 can be used in many ways, like coax, pamper, soothe. It has connotations of intimacy :))

Jian Yao is extremely embarrassed: "You are not allowed to tell him!"

— — — —

After Jian Yao returns to her apartment. She washes up, gets changed into her pyjamas and lies on her comfortable bed.

It's late at night. She looks at the ceiling for a while. Then she sits up and walks to her handbag. She takes out a photo. A photo she made a copy in Bo Jinyan's study.

It's a photo of Bo Jinyan. He's lying in a cave. He is lying on the ground. She couldn't tell what the colour of his shirt is, because it's stained with blood. His handsome face is pale. His eyes are shut. He is lying unconscious, next to a pool of blood.

Jian Yao looks at the photo for a long time. Then she gives a big sigh. She holds the photo close to her lips and gently kisses Bo Jinyan's 'cheeks'.

— — — —

Shortly after Jian Yao leaves, Bo Jinyan is also ready to rest.

He takes off his top next to the bed. He looks in the mirror and sees the scars on his body. He thinks about Jian Yao. Her fingers touching his body.

He uses his fingers to touch the same wounds Jian Yao lays her hands on earlier.

It's not ticklish.

Then why is it ticklish when she touched him?

He remembers her beautiful hand. And the sensation he felt when her fingers touched his skin. It's like a white feather brushing past softly and gently.

A woman's touch.

Something stirs within him. Feels like heat is coming out from within him through the wound.

He stands in front of the mirror for a while.

He heads to the bathroom and takes a cold shower before going to bed.

Chapter 36

Dawn breaks into daylight. The morning has begun. The start of another busy yet ordinary day for many people in B City.

Jian Yao is wearing her pyjamas. Her hair tied into a ponytail. She stands in front of her wardrobe.

- Mmm... what should I wear today?

She takes out a light blue shirt and a pair of beige Capri pants. That's her usual attire since she started working. Clothes that are more suitable for the corporate environment.

Then she pauses. She looks at the dresses on the other end of the wardrobe. Those with more vibrant colours and designs.

She thinks for a while. Then she pulls out the prettiest dress that is in the wardrobe.

A sleeveless dress with a flared skirt and shoulder straps with buttons. It shows off her collarbone, nice arms and a little bit of her back. It's a tight fitting dress so it accentuates her curves. But it's not a low cut dress that would make her look too sexy. The pale yellow fabric is a perfect match to her beautiful skin complexion.

She looks at the mirror and is pleased with how she looks.

She takes a hair tie with a sparkly crystal design on it. She usually leaves her hair down but she wants to tie it up today. She puts on a little lip gloss, changes into a pair of heeled sandals and heads downstairs.

— — — — —

Bo Jinyan is reading the papers when she went into his apartment. Reading the newspaper in the morning is something he does every morning. An old fashioned habit of his.

He is so focused he didn't even take a glance at her. Jian Yao is surprised to see that breakfast is already on the table. He went out earlier this morning to get it from their usual stall.

"You woke up early today." She sits opposite him, and picks up a section of the paper that he is not reading. She pulls a bowl of congee to herself.

"Yeah..." Actually, he woke up early because he didn't sleep well last night.

He thinks about his lack of sleep. He lifts his head to look at the culprit.

— — — — —

Jian Yao is reading the papers when she feels someone is staring at her.

It's a familiar gaze. She can see from the corners of her eyes that Bo Jinyan is looking at her.

She blushes.

Today, she has tied her hair up, showing her shoulders. She can tell that Bo Jinyan are starrng at her shoulders.

She pretends not to notice, and continues to eat her breakfast.

- He is still starrng...

“Are you going for a beauty contest today?” He finally speaks.

Jian Yao blushes even more. She takes a look at him. He does not seem to be ‘attracted’ by the looks. He’s merely commenting on the fact that she looks different today.

“Well, you said we are going to meet someone from the Central Police Station today.” says Jian Yao, “I thought it would be nice to leave him a good first impression.”

Bo Jinyan thinks for a few seconds: “Then why didn’t you dress like this the first time we met? Is it not necessary to leave me a good first impression?”

Jian Yao laughs: “But you don’t care. In fact, you don’t know how to appreciate woman. Why should I care about what kind of first impressions I will leave you?”

Bo Jinyan doesn't look pleased.

As she stands up to wash her hands, she hears his voice from behind her: “I don’t know? 33C, 22, 34.”

Jian Yao is dumbfounded. Then she realised..... It’s her measurements!

She turns around to stare at him: “How... how did you know? You read my medical files?”

Bo Jinyan gives an impish smile: “Did you think that is necessary? I can tell just by looking.” As he speaks, he continues to ‘scan’ her.

Jian Yao: “Stop looking at me!”

— — — — —

Bo Jinyan needs to have an official title from the Police Department before he can take part in any investigations. Today they have come to the Central Station to finalise the details.

The Central Police station is a white building amongst the tall and mature trees in the city centre.

Jian Yao follows Bo Jinyan into the Chief Inspector’s office.

As previously agreed, Bo Jinyan will have his own research lab within the station. He is a university professor working with the Chinese Police.

His responsibilities include:

1. Lead the investigation team when there are crimes in his area of expertise.
2. As an independent consultant, give advice to officers investigating homicide cases.

The first responsibility is like what he used to do with the FBI in the US.

The second responsibility is a trial role. Criminal psychology is only an emerging field in China. While the Police Department is keen to train and upskill staff in the area, they do not have the necessary resources to set up a complete separate department for it yet.

With Bo Jinyan's help, they can prove to the front line officers the benefits of criminal psychology and help raise awareness and interest for it.

So, when there's a homicide case, Bo Jinyan will form a sub committee within the office. There will be another group of officers using the more traditional investigation methods. Bo Jinyan's team will be responsible for profiling. The two teams will share information, resources and work together to solve the case.

After they have locked in the details, the Chief Inspector stands up and smiles: "Professor Bo, let me introduce you to the rest of the team."

The secretary next to him says: "I'll take Jian Yao with me to complete the paperwork for your role."

After she completes her tasks, Jian Yao waits in the corridor. She sits in a chair to wait for Bo Jinyan.

Bo Jinyan is in a meeting with the Chief Inspector and several other senior officers.

A group of police officers are working in an office across the hallway from where Jian Yao is sitting. There are no urgent cases at the moment. They are all quite relaxed. Besides, it is close to their lunch break. One of them notices the pretty lady sitting in the corridor.

"Who is that?" Someone asks.

"Oh, I think she is the assistant of the new criminal psychologist, Professor Bo. She is probably a post-graduate student working with Professor Bo."

"Ah..." Everyone turns to look at her.

Jian Yao is still sitting on the chair. She notices the attention. She spent a lot of time in the police station when she was young because of her father. Therefore, she feels quite at home with the officers. She walks over and shakes hand with them while introducing herself: "Hi. I am Jian Yao."

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When Bo Jinyan and the senior officers finished their meeting, they see a group of men crowding around Jian Yao. She looks lovely in her pale yellow dress, with a polite smile on her face. She is obviously the centre of attention at the moment.

Bo Jinyan frowns.

The Chief Inspector officially introduces Bo Jinyan and Jian Yao to the group. Jian Yao walks to stand beside Bo Jinyan. The Chief Inspector jokingly tells the group off: "I know it's not often we get a pretty girl in the station. But enough chatting. Get back to work!"

One officer laughs: "But Chief Inspector, it's lunchtime. We are just getting acquainted with our new workmate." Everyone else laughs.... except Bo Jinyan. He does not find it funny at all. He stands expressionless besides Jian Yao.

Such an antisocial guy. But that's Bo Jinyan!

One of the Senior officer suggests: "Should we have lunch together?"

A few others are about to nod their head in agreement when Bo Jinyan just says coldly: "Sorry, we are busy. Goodbye." He turns to look at Jian Yao.

Everyone is quiet. Jian Yao senses the awkward atmosphere. She quickly adds: "Yes, we have to rush. We have an appointment with the

Department of National Security. Next time, Professor Bo will be pleased to join you..."

— — — — —

Appointment with National Security is just an excuse Jian Yao made up. When they are in the car, she asks: "Why did you decline the invitation to dine with them?"

With his hands on the steering wheel, he answers slowly: "Not only are you not thanking me for rescuing you from that place which is overloaded with testosterones, you are interfering with my personal freedom?"

Jian Yao is amused by his answer: "What testosterones? They are a nice bunch of lads." She knows he doesn't like socialising, so she says gently: "Next time when you want to decline an invitation, leave it to me. It's part of the assistant's responsibility. And even if you have to go, you don't need to speak to them, just treat them as if they are not there. Ok?"

Bo Jinyan seems happy with the suggestion. His silence means he agrees with what she says.

Jian Yao leans back onto the seat. She closes her eyes to rest. After a while, she opens them and says slowly: "When it comes to testosterones. You don't seem to have any."

Bo Jinyan frowns immediately. That's an insult! He takes a look at her.

She has her eyes closed again. She looks lovely in the afternoon sun. Her delicate skin, beautiful features, sensual curves...

He turns away and concentrates on his driving.

"Testosterones? Of course I..." he responds haughtily: "I am just better at controlling my urges than those cowboys."

— — — — —

Jian Yao gives her mom a call that night. Although her mom is concerned about her new job, she respects Jian Yao's decision.

After a while, her mom asks: "How's Fu Ziyu? Do you see each other often?"

Jian Yao knows where she is heading: "Mom, I am not interested in him."

"Oh." Another disappointment. But she understands that love cannot be forced. Jian Yao is also a little disappointed.

- Why didn't you ask about Bo Jinyan?

After talking to her mom, she calls her sister.

Compared to mom, Jian Xuan is a lot more 'switch on'. Once she hears Jian Yao is working for Bo Jinyan, she asks her sister: "You like him, don't you?"

Jian Yao laughs. That's equivalent to saying yes to Jian Xuan's question.

Jian Xuan is very supportive. She gave Jian Yao lots of ideas and advice.

The last phone call is to Li. It's been months since they have contacted one another. But they both lead a busy life, it's normal for them not to have spoken to each other for months at a time. The friendship never tarnished because of the lack of contact.

It's past 8:00pm. He is usually awake at this time of the day.

But no one answers the phone.

Chapter 37

A few weeks later.

The top floor of the Central Police building is the staff canteen. During lunchtime, it's packed with people. The smell of rice and other dishes fills the place.

Jian Yao has two sets of meals on her tray. One in a takeaway box and another on a plate. She turns around to look for a seat.

Someone is waving to her: "Jian Yao, this way."

She looks over and sees a few officers from the team they work with most. She joins their table.

"Professor Bo is not here again?" Someone asks.

Jian Yao smiles: "Yes, when he is busy, he doesn't feel hungry."

Another officer smiles: "It's so nice to have a student like Jian Yao."

Jian Yao corrects him: "I am actually his assistant, not his student."

People tends to make that mistake all the time. She has clarified her role numerous times already. She feels it's important that people don't mistaken their relationship. They are not a 'teacher' and a 'student' to each other. Because if the relationship is to progress into something else later, she doesn't want any misunderstandings and complications...

After lunch, a young officer walks her back to the lab.

"Xiao Jian (nickname for Jian Yao), would you be interested to watch a movie with me? "Galaxy Battleship" releases tomorrow."

Jian Yao smiles: "Sorry, I am busy tomorrow."

He looks disappointed: "Maybe next time." He says goodbye to Jian Yao.

Jian Yao pushes open the lab door. Bo Jinyan is sitting at his desk, working away. He's in the same position as when she left earlier on for lunch. There is a small mountain of documents in front of him.

There are no cases for them to follow at the moment. So they are working on building up a database of crime statistics.

It involves visiting serial killers, their family and any surviving victims. For the past few weeks, they spent a lot of time talking to criminals in the prison, and going all over the city to trace their backgrounds. It's not as nerve wrecking as solving real cases but it's still a physically and mentally tiring task.

When Bo Jinyan is working, he shuts himself off from the rest of the world. He is so focused that Jian Yao wonders when he will get out his 'shell'.

— — — — —

He finally stops what he is doing. With his eyes still fixed on the computer screen, he says: "Hi, the Criminal Psychology Beauty."

Since she started work in this building, there are suggestions that she should be called the 'Central Police Station Beauty'. Back in her university days, there are a lot of girls that were more attractive than her, so she never got so much attention. But this building is filled with blokes, with hardly any other young female staffs around. But 'the Criminal Psychology Beauty'??

Anyway, she clears the files on his desk and puts down the takeaway box: "You have to eat something."

“Alright.”

Jian Yao is used to this. She literally has to force Bo Jinyan to break for meals.

Bo Jinyan looks pre-occupied. He is still reading a document as he shovels the food into his mouth. He probably doesn't really know what the food taste like. When he eats, he is like a little kid that just wants to finish quickly so he can get on with other more important stuff in life.

He suddenly remembers something: “Jian Yao, where's the conversation records with the criminals with death penalty. You know, the ones from West End Prison?”

“I've emailed them to you.” Jian Yao answers.

“Ok.” He stops asking. Perhaps there's the moment where work was temporarily out of his mind. He looks down at his food. Then he frowns and asks Jian Yao: “Where did you buy this? It's awful!”

Jian Yao takes a look. He's finished half the box of rice before he complained.

Or perhaps she should say he finally discovered.

He is such a picky eater. Surely the food from the canteen is not fine enough for him.

Jian Yao smiles and tells him: “But you've been having this for days. You were just too busy to realise. It cannot be compared to restaurant standard, but it's fresh and nutritious. Come on, just finish it.”

Bo Jinyan finishes his lunch reluctantly.

Jian Yao is on the internet. She sees an advertisement for “Galaxy Battleship”. She asks Bo Jinyan casually: “There’s a new si-fi movie releasing tomorrow. Are you interested?”

Bo Jinyan has finished his lunch. He walks to the sink to wash his hands and rinse his face. Then he turns around to Jian Yao: “No.”

She is a little disappointed. He walks over to her and leans on her desk: “I have arranged for something more interesting than watching a movie.”

Jian Yao sips the cup of tea in front of her: “What is that?”

Bo Jinyan: “A trip to Cheng Provence Prison. We will be interviewing a few interesting criminals there.”

Jian Yao puts down her cup. She looks at the computer screen: “I won’t go. Tomorrow is Saturday. I need to rest.” This type of investigation is not urgent. It would not make any difference if they go next week.

Bo Jinyan didn’t expect her to say no: “You are.... not happy?”

What can Jian Yao tell him? That she just wants to spend the weekend with him alone, watching a movie, having a date with him...?

She just ignores him and gets back to her work.

Bo Jinyan stands by her desk for a while. Then he walks back to his seat.

Nobody says a word for the next few hours.

At first, Jian Yao is still a little crossed. But after awhile she too, is so focused on her work that she soon forgets about the incident. Occasionally, she will glance at Bo Jinyan, only to find him working quietly and attentively.

Around 5pm, a staff from the mailing room comes over to give Jian Yao an envelope: "Jian Yao, it's addressed to you."

Jian Yao thanks him and opens the envelope.

It's two tickets to "Galaxy Battleship" for tomorrow afternoon, in the couples box. (Room with an extra large leather sofas designed for couples)

Jian Yao puts the ticket back into the envelope. She walks towards the door.

Bo Jinyan asks softly: "Where are you going?"

Jian Yao turns round to look at him: "I think these tickets belong to Xiao Chen." Xiao Chen asked if she would watch the movie with him earlier. He might have filled in her details when he made the booking.

Bo Jinyan stops what he is doing. He folds his arms together, and looks at her: "Who is Xiao Chen?" He asks: "I booked those tickets."

Jian Yao: "...you booked the tickets?"

Bo Jinyan picks up the document he was reading: "Well, does this cheer you up? My unhappy assistant?"

Jian Yao sits down and looks at the tickets: "Yes. I am happy now." She smiles. She is reading the label on the tickets "Couples Box". She asks: "Why did you buy the couple box tickets?"

Bo Jinyan looks at her: "You don't expect me to squash inside the big theatre with other people, do you?"

Of course. What else can it be?

Nevertheless, she is pleased.

Bo Jinyan's phone rings. While he is on the phone, Jian Yao is still thinking about the movie. She has never been in a couples box before. She heard the sofas in that cinema are very comfortable.

Bo Jinyan finishes his call. He takes a look at her and walks to her desk.

Jian Yao gives him a big smile: "I'll cook breakfast for you tomorrow, as a token of appreciation."

"That's not necessary." He answers. Then he takes the tickets from Jian Yao's hand.

"Let's get rid of this." He throws it on her desk. "We have a case to work on. The 79th High School. Homicide."

Well, now they are definitely not going to watch the movie anymore. But Jian Yao quietly picks up the tickets and puts them in her wallet.

— — — — —

The sun has set. There is a pale glow of the moon in the horizon.

The 79th High School is the outskirts of town, next Fragment Hill district. It's a prestigious high school.

When Bo Jinyan, Jian Yao and several officers arrive, the school is in a locked down. A lot of the students are looking out of the window trying to find out what's going on. Overall, the atmosphere is calm, but tense.

The police from a nearby station reports their findings so far: “The deceased’s name is Ruan Ming Huai. Eighteen years old. Third Grade. She is discovered by some students on the peak of “Qi” Hill.

Jian Yao looks pass the deserted playground to a small hill that is next to the school.

“That’s a great lookout point for the surrounding landscape. The school is currently building a viewing platform for the staff and student. It is off limits to the students due to construction. But kids sneaking up there for fun.

Qi Hill. Peak.

Bo Jinyan has a pair of latex gloves on. He swats down next to the body. He takes a good look around.

Jian Yao is standing behind him. She feels very sorry for the girl who died.

Ruan Ming Huai is lying next to a piece of large rock. There are blood stains on the rock. There is also a pool of blood on the concrete ground. It looks as if all her blood has been drained out of her body.

The fatal injury seems to be the slit in the throat. It caused the neck artery to burst. She died of excessive blood loss.

But she also had multiple injuries on her body.

There are two cuts on her face. One on each side of her cheeks. The wounds are deep, with a mixture of blood and soil on the surface. You can tell she is an attractive girl before the wounds were there. There are more cuts on her shoulders and legs. Her white dress soaked in her own blood.

They get more information about her.

Ruan Ming Huai is one of the top students at school. She is from a rich family. She is a member of the school committee. Yesterday, she collected 40,000 Yuan (Chinese currency) worth of fees from the students. She was on her way to the school administration office with the cash.

Her good friend, Huo Xiao Lu was with her. It was around 8pm. The staff in the administration office was not there, so they waited outside. After a while, Huo Xiao Lu left because she needed to go to the toilet. After that, she returned to the dormitory.

They have just finished their exams, and there were no classes the next day. Huo Xiao Lu thought Ruan Ming Huai would go home after dropping off the money. Her family lives nearby. It was not until this morning that her body was discovered by a few students who sneaked up to the peak.

The staff from the administration office returned to the office just before 9pm. He did not see Ruan Ming Huai. In other words, nobody knew when she left the administration office. Her time of death was between 9pm to 11pm, which suggests it's shortly after she left the administration office. And there's no sign of the money. It looks like it's been stolen.

— — — —

Bo Jinyan swats in front of the body for less than ten minutes. Then he looks at the other officers and then at Jian Yao.

"A hasty and immature murder." He says; "What are your thoughts so far?"

Jian Yao looks at the body again: "I want to solve the case quickly and catch the killer. Does the killer have no feelings? How can he or she be so cruel to a young girl?"

"Yes, the person has developed an urge to kill." He nods. He stands up and looks at the school from the peak, "If he/she is not stopped, there will be more deaths."

Bo Jinyan takes a look at the officers: "The killer is not an experienced killer. He/she left behind a lot of evidence - hair, finger prints, footprints... If you do a good job with the forensic evidences, we should be able to solve the case within 24 hours."

She is amazed. "24 hours? That's great."

Bo Jinyan looks at her: "Actually, 4 hours is all I need."

Jian Yao knows by now that he is not just boasting. If he said 4 hours, that's really all that he will need. She asks with admiration: "Wow. You are truly a genius. Can you tell me what you have found out so far?"

Bo Jinyan smiles and asks her: "You should try and work it out for yourself. First question. Is the killer from within the school, or an outsider?"

Ah... another teaching session.

Jian Yao smiles. it's not often that he would ask questions so patiently. The compliment she gave him earlier on must have put him in a good mood.

She thinks for a while: "Within the school. Because there is quite a good security system in this school. All the teachers, staffs and students need to register their arrival and departure."

“Second question.” He puts his hands in his pants pocket and stands next to her. “Did she come here willingly, or was she dragged here?”

Jian Yao takes a look at the surroundings: “I think she came here on her own free will. Even though it was late at night, there should still be a lot of people within the school complex. It would have been difficult to get her up here if she didn’t walk up herself. Besides, we didn’t notice any signs of struggle on our way up.”

Bo Jinyan has a smile on his face. He looks at Jian Yao: “Then what brings a girl to a remote place like this?”

Jian Yao answers immediately: “Boyfriend!”

This is the perfect place for couples looking for a secluded spot.

“OK.” says Bo Jinyan: “Time to talk to some of her classmates. Let’s see who has a romantic relationship with this top student.”

Jian Yao follows behind. Bo Jinyan stops momentarily and turns to look at her: “This is behavioural evidence. It’s not that complicated. Right?”

Jian Yao smiles. She must remember to praise him more often.

“That’s because you are able to explain complicated issues in a simple way.” she says.

Bo Jinyan is extremely pleased with himself. Under his guidance, Jian Yao is getting better at filtering through the facts to get to the truth.

Chapter 38

In the vicinity of the 79th Secondary school, there are a lot of old deserted textile factories. After the SOE reforms in the early 21st century, most small scale textile factories faced bankruptcy and closed

down. Many of the laid off workers set up street stalls in the Fragrant Hill district to make ends meet. And many of their children study in the 79th Secondary School.

Ruan Ming Huai's best friend, Huo Xiao Lu is one of them.

Jian Yao and Bo Jinyan observe as an officer takes her testimony.

It's late in the night and it's dark outside. The school is well lit, but there is a sense of emptiness in the place. They have set up a temporary office in one of the classrooms. A girl is grieving the loss of a good friend.

"Did she tell you whether she was meeting someone afterwards?" Asks the officer.

Huo Xiao Lu is weeping: "No." She shakes her head.

She is an ordinary girl with average looks. A small face with some freckles around the nose. But her eyes look clear and sharp. She is wearing a simple T Shirt and jeans.

"Does she have a boyfriend?" Asks the officer.

She shakes her head again: "Of course not."

"Can you please repeat what happened that night?. Include every detail." Bo Jinyan says suddenly.

Huo Xiao Lu looks at this man who has been quietly sitting throughout the interview. She nods.

"Around 8pm. Huai Huai collected all the money. We left the classroom together. I don't recall seeing anyone along the way. The third graders are on holiday. Other students are revising for exams in their own classrooms." She clears her throat and continues: "We arrived at the administration office. The door is open but there's no one

inside. We waited outside for a while. A few teachers walked past us. We were chatting. We didn't pay too much attention.

The officer interrupts: "We have confirmed that with the CCTV footages."

Huo Xiao Lu continues: "Around 8:30pm, my stomach started to hurt. I usually get cramps on the first day of my period. So I returned to the dormitory to rest."

"Was there anyone in the dorm?" asks the officer.

"No. My roommates were studying in their classrooms." answers Huo Xiao Lu.

"Then? What did you do in the dormitory?" Bo Jinyan asks.

Huo Xiao Lu answers: "Well, I went to the.... toilet. Then I noticed my clothes were stained, so I washed them. Then I made myself a cup of tea, lied on bed to read. After a while, I went to bed."

The officer asks one final question: "Does she have an entanglement with any of the boys? Perhaps a crush, or someone is chasing after her?"

Huo Xiao Lu: "Well... there is this boy..."

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The second person they interviewed is another good friend of Ruan Ming Huai. Her name is Qi Xiao Ran.

Like Ruan Ming Huai, her family lives in the area so she does not need to stay in the school dormitories. She starts crying when asked about what happened that night.

"If I knew something would happen to her, I wouldn't have left her alone." She sobs. "I left school immediately after the classes. She looked fine on the day. Why would anyone kill her?"

Bo Jinyan asks: "What did you do after school?"

Qi Xiao Ran pauses for a while. Then she answers: "I was with my boyfriend. I didn't go home until 10pm. Mr. Officer, is it possible not to tell my parents about this?"

Bo Jinyan puts his hand on his knee. There's a small smile on his face: "Sure. Everyone is entitled to pursue love the way they want to."

Jian Yao takes a look at him. Somehow, this sounded funny coming from him. A 'love idiot' has views on courting and dating too?

"Hmm.." The officer asks again: "What were the two of you doing?"

"Not much... just chatting. We were sitting in amongst the trees just outside of the school." She mentions the name of her boyfriend. It's someone from her class.

"I really didn't think this would happen to Huai Huai..." Tears are streaming down uncontrollably. "I am shocked. Why would anyone want to kill her... there's college entrance exams next year... but she will never...."

The officer passes her a tissue: "Last question. This is very important. Does she have any entanglements with any of the boys in school?"

Qi Xiao Ran answers: "Su Bei. Huai Huai likes Su Bei. But Su Bei is not interested in her. They don't get along with one another... Does he have anything to do with the murder?"

— — — — —

“Su Bei”

The third girl’s name is Zhao Ying Zi. She is the daughter of one of the teachers at school. It’s the same name... again.

She looks like a straight forward girl. Her eyes are swollen from all the crying, but she speaks with a firm voice: “Huai Huai likes Su Bei. It’s been two years. But Su Bei is not interested. Hua Huai belongs to the school committee. Su Bei heads the sports committee. But they are not on talking terms.”

Jian Yao tries to clarify: “Even if Su Bei is not interested in her, why are they not even talking to each other?”

Zhao Ying Zi pauses, then answers: “Because Huai Huai mentioned before that Su Bei might be gay, because he likes to hang around the basketball players. I don’t think Huai Huai meant to start a rumour, but it ended up that way, and Su Bei was not happy.”

Bo Jinyan smiles: “Ruan Ming Huai must be a bit of a diva too, right? Just because someone doesn’t like her, they are homosexuals?”

Zhao Ying Zi says: “Well, she is a proud girl. Apparently, Su Bei finds her arrogant. But this Su Bei is not Mr. Nice Guy either. I heard he gambles a lot with those basketball boys, and lately he has been losing a lot of money.”

Everyone is quiet.

Gambling... then the missing 40,000 yuan...

“Does Ruan Ming Huai still like Su Bei?” Jian Yao asks.

“Yes.” Zhao Ying Zi says quietly. “She still likes him.”

— — — — —

It seems more layers of this mystery have been peeled off. They are closer to the truth now.

After a few more interviews with other students, they are sure that the only boy that she has involvements with was Su Bei.

Su Bei. Eighteen. His parents used to be workers in the textile factory too. From the records provided by the school, he is tall and handsome. His grades are average but he is very good at sports. Many girls are attracted to these 'sporty bad boys'.

Recently, he has lost thousands of dollars in sports betting.

The motive is there. And he has no alibi. Nobody knows where he was during the time of the murder. In fact, no one is sure where he is currently. His parents are in Zhuhai. He lives with his grandfather, who has no idea where Su Bei is most of the time.

— — — — —

It's 9pm. Bo Jinyan has spent one and a half out of his four hours. In the temporary office, officers continue to take testimonies from other students and staff. Bo Jinyan thinks he has enough information. He asks Jian Yao to go to the playground with him.

Summer is almost over. Jian Yao feels the cool night's breeze against her skin. She is only wearing T Shirt and a pair of Capri pants. She wraps her arms around herself to keep warm.

"Does he hate her so much? What makes a high school student so determined to kill his peer?"

Bo Jinyan stands next to her. He looks straight ahead and comments: "Sometimes, killing is their way of escaping from this world."

Jian Yao always knew Bo Jinyan understands those psychopaths. When he is investigating, he is able to maintain impartial and never let his emotions get in the way of work. But perhaps, it's simply because... he has no feelings?

"You have two and a half hours left..." She changes the subject.

He glances at her, as if to say he has it all under control.

An officer walks up to them. It's Xiao Chen, the young man who asked Jian Yao out for a movie. He says to Bo Jinyan: "Professor Bo, we are going to check out the places Su Bei usually hangs out. Would you like to come with us?"

Bo Jinyan shakes his head: "That will not be necessary."

Xiao Chen is about to walk off when he notices Jian Yao's face is a little pale. She still has her arms around herself. He starts to unbutton his jacket: "This area is close to the hills, the temperature drops at night. You should wear something warmer."

Jian Yao is feeling cold, but she quickly waves her hands: "No no, I'm alright."

Bo Jinyan takes a look at this young charming officer. Xiao Chen...

Oh.... It's him. The one who tried to ask Jian Yao out for movie, who distracted her from work and even caused her to be angry with him.

- And what is he trying to do now? Is he interested in my assistant? How long has he had that jacket on? He's been running around the whole night. There's a combination of his odour and sweat on it. Jian Yao's skin is delicate...

This...man is about to put his jacket on her.

- What is he trying to do? Testosterones transfer?

Jian Yao is about to say thank you to Xiao Chen when they hear an icy voice: "She doesn't wear clothes that belongs to strangers."

They are both stunned. Then they see him taking off his jacket and wrapping it around Jian Yao.

"She can wear mine." He says to Xiao Chen. "You can go now."

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The cool night breezes brushes past them.

Jian Yao is standing there with his jacket wrapped around her.

Xiao Chen looks a little embarrassed. He seems to come to some sort of understanding. Jian Yao knows what's in his mind. But she is not sure herself if that is in fact the case. Once again, Bo Jinyan's seemingly intimate gestures always have a logical and non-intimate reason behind them. This might just be another example.

But she is touched. During the first encounter, he refused her request for letting her borrow his clothes. In the end, he reluctantly gave her Fu Ziyu's jacket.

But she feels that he should learn to be more considerate. So she says to him: "Xiao Chen is only concerned for me. The things that you said, they might hurt his feelings."

Bo Jinyan: "Why should I care about his feelings?"

Jian Yao: "....."

-Ok... Forget it.

She looks at Bo Jinyan: "Are you...cold?"

He is looking ahead. A forensic doctor and an officer are walking towards them.

"Nah..." He answers Jian Yao: "What? Do you think I am not strong enough?"

— — — — —

There are more discoveries .

1. The wounds on her body were done to her at the time of death. The most likely scenario is that the killer slit her throat. Then as the blood is draining from the neck artery, he inflicted the cuts on her face and limbs.
1. According to the owner of a small supermarket nearby, Su Bei bought a knife from his shop. The owner recognises him as he is a frequent customer.
1. The police found a backpack in an old air raid shelter in Qi Hill. It's covered with leaves. The students recognise the pack. It belongs to the victim.

They pass Bo Jinyan a blood stained cotton back pack.

"They found the money." The officer passes Bo Jinyan a clear plastic bag with all the cash in it."The killer didn't take it with him. Instead, he hid it in the mountain. We are trying to match the fingerprints on the notes, but that might take a while."

Bo Jinyan have a look at the items. He pulls out a large yellow envelope. He takes a look inside, the notes have blood stains on them too.

He passes the evidences back to the officer.

— — —

“Why didn’t he take the money with him?” Jian Yao asks.

“He’s afraid.” Answers Bo Jinyan.

Jian Yao nods. The money is stained with blood. That would attract unnecessary attention.

They see a group of officers walking towards the entrance of the school. They must be the team looking for Su Bei. All the evidence points to him: Motive, weapon, his lack of alibi, his disappearance...

Behind them, students are slowly leaving their classrooms and make their way home. The lock down order has been lifted. The students are free to go.

Jian Yao turns to look at Bo Jinyan: “Looks like the police has also figured out who is the killer.”

But Bo Jinyan has a smile on his face: “Have they?”

Jian Yao turns to look at him.

“Of course they will need to find Su Bei. He is involved in the case. But...” He turns to the Seniors Block. A group of students are walking out to the playground. They look tired. It’s been a long night.

“The killer is there.” He points to a group of girls. It’s Ruan Ming Huai’s friends - Huo Xiao Lu, daughter of redundant factory workers; Qi Xiao Ran, who also lives in town like Ruan, and Zhao Ying Zi, child of a teacher in the school.

Jian Yao feels her head being tapped gently.

It's Bo Jinyan, of course. He whispers in her ear: "Which one of them killed Ruan Ming Huai?"

Jian Yao looks at the three girls. All of them have been crying. But each of them has a slightly different look on their face.

One girl looks calm and collected. The other girl looks upset. And the last girl has a determined look on her face.

Jian Yao's gaze rests on the girl that is calm and collected.

"Huo Xiao Lu?"

Bo Jinyan looks at her with a big smile: "Good. Our Criminal Psychology Beauty is showing improvement."

Chapter 39

The playground is filled with the noise of students chatting as they make their way to the school gates.

Bo Jinyan finds Huo Xiao Lu in the crowd. He smiles: "Let's go."

Jian Yao: "Go? Where are we going?"

Bo Jinyan takes a stride forward: "Case Study. Let's find out how this young teenage girl developed into a psychopath."

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Even though it's just one street away from the school, the atmosphere is completely different. It is still and quiet in this part of town. Most of the

shops are closed. The dim street lamp lights up the pavement Huo Xiao Lu walks on.

Bo Jinyan and Jian Yao is following her from a distance in his Grand Cherokee. Shortly after they got into the car, Jian Yao calls the officer in charge and shares BJY's conclusion with him. He is a bit dubious. Nevertheless, he sent two officers to go with them.

Jian Yao is not surprised by the officer's doubts. She is sure once the fingerprints and DNA samples match their findings, the officers will know that they are right. After all, criminal psychology is an emerging field in this country. It takes time for people to accept its merits.

Bo Jinyan waits for Jian Yao to finish her conversation with the officer. Then he asks: "Tell me, what made you 'click'?"

Jian Yao answers: "Well, from the surface, Su Bei is the suspect. Like you said earlier, the person that she was meeting in Qi Hill is Su Bei. He bought a knife, and he has a gambling debt that he needs to clear. He probably had the intention of robbing Ruan Ming Huai. But whether he had the intent to kill, I am not so sure."

Bo Jinyan nods.

Jian Yao continues: "You mentioned we have to analyse their behaviour. " Therefore, even though the physical evidence points towards Su Bei, the behaviour evidences suggests otherwise."

"Explain..."

"The wounds on Ruan Ming Huai's body. The killer disfigured her face, and stabbed her multiple times on her shoulder and legs. Why would Su Bei do that? He was after the money. The wounds on the face are signs of jealousy. Also, Ruan was lying on a concrete platform, but there were a lot of soil on top of Ruan's dress. It looked like the soil had been dumped on top of her. From this, I suspect the killer is a

girl. Someone who was jealous of Ruan. Based on the background information we know about the three girls, Huo Xiao Lu is the most likely the candidate.”

Bo Jinyan gives her a rare praise: “Not bad at all. Continue.”

Jian Yao recalls the time when Huo Xiao Lu gave her statement. Is it because she is hanging out more with BJY these days, she is more sensitive to how psychopaths behaves? She says: “She was acting a little strange. Even though she was crying.... she was just too calm and collected.”

The corner of Bo Jinyan’s lips curls up.

Jian Yao gives a sigh. She looks at the girl that is walking with her head down: “She was the last person that saw the victim. If Ruan Ming Huai had a date with Su Bei, she would most likely know about it. Also, she has no alibi.”

Jian Yao thought she had done very well. Three important observations that leads to her conclusion. Deep down, she is hoping she would impress Bo Jinyan. She looks at him in confidence, and in anticipation of him praising her.

But Bo Jinyan always have a way of crushing her hopes: “Is that all you can come up with?” He asks.

Jian Yao: “...eh...yeah.”

Bo Jinyan smiles at her.

Jian Yao immediately asks him: “Please tell me. What other discoveries have you made?”

Huo Xiao Lu has turned into another street. Bo Jinyan has to concentrate on the driving before answering her. When he is ready, he says to her: "Another three points"

- There are another three points she didn't think of?

"No. 1- Distance"

"Distance...?"

"Our killer slit Ruan's throat, with only one cut. This is not an easy thing to do. The blood stain pattern suggests the killer cut her from behind, at very close range. Besides, If the killer was in front of the victim, the blood would have spatter all over her face and body, which would make the chance of her being discovered by others much higher.

Based on the peak's layout, there was nowhere for the killer to hide. No trees, or big rocks. The killer didn't suddenly appear to attack. Therefore, it's most likely they were together. It's a matter of distance.

Everyone keep a distance with one another. Generally, the gap is between 1.2 to 3.3 metres. It's enough space for people to feel comfortable with. When the distance is less than 0.6 metres, it's considered intimate... like you and me now."

Jian Yao takes a glance at him. Then she repeats what he says: "So they were sitting next to each other. Very intimate."

"It's obvious." Bo Jinyan continues: "Considering the victim's relationship with Su Bei, they would not sit so close to one another. Of course, there is always the possibility that they finally overcome their misunderstandings and cuddles together... but that's highly unlikely."

Jian Yao says: "And it's more likely that the two best friends are sitting together. Ruan Ming Huai did not expect her friend to take out a knife to kill her, so she didn't have time to react."

Huo Xiao Lu has entered a complex. It's an old housing estate that a lot of the ex-textile workers stay. They park their car on the side of the road. They wait until Huo Xiao Lu has almost disappeared from sight before turning off the car headlights and driving into the complex.

Bo Jinyan continues with his second point: "No.2 - Money."

Jyao asks: "You mean Huo Xiao Lu is after the money because she comes from a poor family? "

"No." He says with a touch of frustration in his voice: "What kind of conclusion is that?"

Jian Yao: "... please continue."

Bo Jinyan carefully drives into the complex: "Do you remember how the corpse is positioned? She was lying sideways. When her throat was slit, the blood would have ejected forward. Besides, it takes time for the blood pool on the ground to form." Bo Jinyan continues to explain: "The money was in a backpack. If the killer was after the money. He/she would have removed the backpack soon after Ruan was killed. Instead, it was left on ground, long enough for the blood to soak through the pack?"

"This means..." says Jian Yao: "That the motive for the murder is not the money?"

"Yes, the backpack was left on the body for at least half an hour before it was removed." says Bo Jinyan : "According to the forensics, it would take the killer no more than five minutes to inflict all the wounds. There is no reason why she would only take the money after half and hour."

“The evidence suggested that the killer was emotionally unstable, but bold in her killings. Yet, hiding the money is a cowardly act. So, the most likely scenario is... Killing and stealing... it's done by two different people.”

Jian Yao looks at the surroundings. There are lots of two storey buildings. Each floor would accommodate approximately ten families. At this time of the night, only a few of them are not asleep yet. The lights from their unit seep through the window.

“No. 3 - Huo Xiao Lu's statement.” said Bo Jinyan in a low voice.

Jian Yao has her notebook with her. She turns to the page with Huo Xiao Lu's interview on it. Jian Yao thought something was wrong when Huo spoke. But her statement looks fine. She can't pinpoint the problem.

“I'll explain this one later.” He says quietly. He picks up his night vision binoculars.

“OK.” Jian Yao takes up the other pair of binoculars. By now, the officers that came with them are in a car parked behind them. They are probably doing the same thing as Bo Jinyan and Jian Yao.

On the second floor. The unit that is closest to the stairs belongs to Huo Xiao Lu's parents. The curtains are drawn, but there's a gap they can see through on one of the sides.

Jian Yao adjusts the focus of her binoculars so she could look at what's inside the house through the curtain gaps. She is horrified.

A boy is tied to a chair. His hands bound together behind his back and his feet are tied to the two front legs of the chair. There is a piece of duct tape over his mouth. He looks familiar. It's Su Bei!

There is fear in his eyes.

Then, they see Huo Xiao Lu next to him. She has a knife in her hand.

Suddenly, Jian Yao hears the car door close. Bo Jinyan has rushed out to get to Huo's unit. The other two officers have come out of their police car too.

In no time, the three of them are outside Huo's unit. Jian Yao hurries behind.

"Huo Xiao Lu. Open the door!" Shout one of the officers.

There's sounds of movement from the inside, but no one opens the door.

"Knock it down." says Bo Jinyan .

One of the officers kicks at it just below the doorknob. The door burst open in a rush of splintered wood and dust. The officers rush in.

Jian Yao is about to go in with them when a hand blocks her way.

It's Bo Jinyan .

Without turning his head towards her, he says: "Follow me." He walks in front of her.

Inside the unit, Huo Xiao Lu is holding a knife. Beside her, Su Bei is wriggling violently trying to free himself.

One of the officers pushes Huo towards the wall. He holds on to her shoulders and forces the knife off her hand. The other officer unties the ropes around Su Bei and removes the duct tape on his mouth.

"Arrest her!" Screams Su Bei. The handsome young face is flushed with anger. He is grabbing onto the shoulders of the officer. "She is

crazy. She killed Ruan Ming Huai. She wants to kill me too. She is mad!"

"Oh, shut up." The officer yells: "You need to come to the station with us too." Then he handcuffs him.

Huo Xiao Lu is handcuffed too. But she looks at Su Bei in a confused and sad manner: "Crazy? You said I am crazy? I did this for you. I got rid of the person you dislike. I... I love you!"

Chapter 40

Huo Xiao Lu's story began when she was eleven years old.

It was love at first sight. She liked Su Bei the first moment she laid her eyes on him.

His parents are also ex-workers from the textile factories. But unlike her, he has lots of friends. He seems to be living a happy and contented life.

She has nothing. She does not like going home. Some nights, she can hear squeaky beds, heavy breathing and moaning sounds. Each time, a different man walks out of her mother's bedroom in the morning.

In 2003, her father abandoned the family. He went off to Dong Guan with another woman. But rather than feeling sad, Huo Xiao Lu felt relieved. She was fed up with the constant fighting between her parents.

However, the peaceful times didn't last long.

Two years after her father left, her mother was made redundant.

A middle aged woman with no formal education or specialised skill. She turned to prostitution to support herself and her daughter.

Her mother did her best to solicit in areas away from Huo Xiao Lu's school and where her friends live. Her classmate assumed her mother was working as a labourer out of town. But every time Huo Xiao Lu takes the money to pay for school fees, she feels dirty and disgusted.

She didn't always hate Ruan Ming Huai. But she decided to 'befriend' her after Ruan started the rumours about Su Bei being an homosexual.

No one can defame her prince. She decided to become Ruan's friend first, then she will find an opportunity to avenge her.

The murder was an impulsive decision.

That evening, Ruan Ming Huai received a call from Su Bei. Ruan asked Huo Xiao Lu to leave first. The arrogant and joyous smile on Ruan's face infuriated her.

- Su Bei was falling for this shallow and bossy girl?

She tried to persuade Ruan Ming Huai not to meet up with him: "Didn't you say you are over him? Why do you still want to go?"

But Ruan knew her secret. She said scornfully: "Do you think I don't know how you feel towards Su Bei? Shame on you for trying to steal your good friend's boyfriend."

Huo Xiao Lu secretly followed Ruan Ming Huai up the hill.

Su Bei hadn't arrived yet. So she appeared and apologised to Ruan Ming Huai. She assured Ruan she will stay away from Su Bei...

When she saw the blood gushing out of Ruan Ming Huai's wound, and her body convulsing, a great joy swept over her.

It was a thrilling experience.

A few hours later, she found Su Bei on top of an empty watch tower.

This is the place he usually hangs out when he is not happy. Sitting by himself, looking far into the horizon. She found out about this place years ago. She used to stand quietly at the corner, just looking at him...

That night, she approached Su Bei: "What's the matter? Is something bothering you?"

Su Bei's face was very pale. He looked like he was still in shock. "Ah... nothing... Xiao Huo, I have to leave town tonight. I might not see you again. You take care."

This was a bolt from the blue for Huo Xiao Lu. She thought for a moment, then said to him: "Do you have enough money? I have some saving at home I can lend to you. Come with me."

Su Bei had no idea this innocent and quiet looking girl had other motives.

His original plan was to rob Ruan Ming Huai. He knew she had the money from the class.

Anyway, his grades weren't good and he won't stand a chance in getting into the university. He would take the money and travel to **Dong Guanto** find his parents. But then, he thought more about it. Ruan Ming Huai's parents are rich. And she has a crush on him. Perhaps she would help him pay off his gambling debts.

So he was late to their meeting. But when he got there, he found her dead. He saw that the backpack was still there, and the money too. Without thinking, he grabbed the pack and ran off. It wasn't until he was half way down the hill he realised that taking the money would make him a murder suspect.

He panicked. He found an old air raid shelter. So he buried the backpack under a pile of old leaves. Then he left.

He was contemplating his next step when Huo Xiao Lu appeared.

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Huo Xiao Lu put a sleeping pill into the glass of water she gave Su Bei. When he was unconscious, she tied him up. Her mother is often away for weeks at a time. She knew her mom was not due back for at least a week.

But even if mom did come home, she would be able to handle it.

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There are more police cars arriving at the scene.

An officer is looking after the two teenage criminals in the lounge. Bo Jinyan and another officer are searching the house for other evidence.

Jian Yao stands at the entrance. She takes a look at Huo Xiao Lu. Huo has no expression on her face.

Footsteps coming from the stairs.

A middle aged woman with heavy make up, a black dress and black stockings appears.

“What’s the matter? Who are you?” She raises her voice: “Where’s Xiao Lu? Xiao Lu?”

She tries to enter the house but is blocked by Jian Yao: “Sorry, I am with the police. We cannot let you in at the moment.”

The woman sees Huo Xiao Lu handcuffed, standing inside the lounge. There is disbelief on her face.

"Xiao Lu...you... Why are you arresting my daughter...?"

"I killed someone, Ma." Huo Xiao Lu tells her mom in a calm voice, as if she is talking about someone else.

The woman is shocked.

"We need to go to the Police Station together..." Jian Yao puts her hand on the woman's shoulder.

To everyone's surprise. Instead of running toward her daughter, the woman is heading towards the stairs. She is trying to run away?!

But perhaps she is too nervous, she misjudged her footing and was about to trip down the stairs. Jian Yao quickly grabs her by her shoulder to help her regain her balance.

Jian Yao quickly stands in front of her on the top of the staircase.

"Get out of my way." The woman tries to push Jian Yao aside.

Jian Yao is standing on the edge of the step. Because of the push, she loses her balance and falls down the stairs.

"Jian Yao!" Bo Jinyan rushes out of the unit.

Jian Yao is falling with her face facing the top of the stairs. She can see Bo Jinyan in mid-air.

The next thing she knows, her mouth 'kisses' the ground. She is rolling down the stairs. Fortunately the flight is not long.

Her whole body is aching. Her head hurts from hitting the wall. As she struggles to get up, she sees Bo Jinyan swatting beside her. He wraps

one arm around her shoulder and one around her waist. She rests in his warm and familiar embrace.

“Are you ok?” He looks displeased.

“I’m fine.” Jian Yao tries to stand up by pushing off with her hand on his shoulder. A sharp pain is coming from her left ankle. She falls back into his arms. Bo Jinyan tightens his arm. Her face is pressing onto his chest. They are so close that she can hear the pounding of his heart.

Bo Jinyan looks even more annoyed now. He looks down at Jian Yao.

Two officers heard the noise and came out to check if Jian Yao is fine.

Bo Jinyan takes a cold look at Huo Xiao Lu’s mother. He turns to the officers: “It’s fine. You can continue with searching the house.”

Jian Yao pulls Bo Jinyan’s sleeve: “I want to say something to her.”

Bo Jinyan stands up, with her in his arms, he turns so that Jian Yao can see Huo’s mom.

“She is your daughter. You can’t just run away like that. Even though she has killed someone, you cannot give up on her.”

The woman’s face changed. She drops to the ground, looking sad and in despair.

“Are you done?” Jian Yao hears Bo Jinyan’s voice.

“Uhh... yes.” She says softly.

He carries her down the stairs and walks toward the car.

More police cars arrive at the scene. Behind them, two officers are escorting Su Bei and Huo Xiao Lu downstairs. Huo's mother follows behind. She is weeping as she walks

Jian Yao secretly hopes that time will be still, and she could remain in his arms forever.

But...

Jian Yao looks at Bo Jinyan. His face looks annoyed. Very annoyed. She wonders what made him so angry.

"Maybe you should let me down." says Jian Yao. "Other people are walking this way."

Bo Jinyan looks at her: "So, what does me carrying you have to do with other people? "

Jian Yao: "..."

The officer in charge has arrived. He sees Bo Jinyan carrying Jian Yao: "Is Xiao -Jian alright?"

She is just about to reply when Bo Jinyan speaks on her behalf: "She is ok. It's not serious."

Bo Jinyan looks at the people around him. He adjusts the position of his arms slightly so that Jian Yao is more comfortable. Then he starts:

"Huo Xiao Lu is the murderer. We found evidence..."

He explained what's happened to the officer. They listen intently to what Professor Bo has to say.

And at that time, Jian Yao was lying in his arms. She blushes.

- He is doing his briefing in front of everyone while holding someone in his arms.

After he finishes, he says to the officer in charge: "We will leave it. You can take over from here."

The officer in charge is surprised. Bo Jinyan is like a new gem the department has discovered. Now that he has seen how good Bo Jinyan is, he wants all the help he can get.

"Can you stay behind to guide the rest of the search? I can send a couple of officers to accompany Xiao Jian to the hospital.... Xiao Chen, Xiao Zhou. Please go with Xiao Jian."

When Jian Yao heard Xiao Chen's name, something tells her it's not a good idea.

As expected. Bo Jinyan gives Xiao Chen an icy glance. Xiao Chen looks a little embarrassed too. He stays quiet.

"Gee.. you really know how to choose..." Bo Jinyan says sarcastically to the officer in charge.

The officer in charge is perplexed at his comment. Jian Yao elbows Bo Jinyan lightly in his chest.

Bo Jinyan looks down at her. Then he tells the officer in charge: "My work here is done. Later, I will follow up with the criminal analysis. Goodbye."

He gently put Jian Yao down in the passenger seat. Jian Yao thought he's going to close the door and walk to the driver's seat. But he did not.

He switches on the light inside the car: "Turn around and let me take a look."

Jian Yao leans over slightly: "I'm alright. Only a few scratches."

He didn't answer.

His shirt is stained with the dirt that was on her face. He holds up her face with his hand and examines it under the light.

He is still grumpy....

His cool fingertips gently touching a swell on her forehead. She puts her fingers over the part he just touched. Oh, there is a reasonably sized bump.

"Oh great!" He said "You almost split your head."

Jian Yao: "... it was an accident."

He looks into her eyes: "Is it painful?"

It's actually not that bad, but Jian Yao answers softly: "Mmm... quite painful." She lifts her eyes to look at him.

His answer is brisk: "Just endure it."

But then, he adds: "I will put some ice on it when we get home."

".... ok."

He looks at her feet: "Take off your shoe."

He holds her left foot with his hand. As his fingertips touch her sole, it feels cold and ticklish. Her face is blushing again.

But he doesn't seem to notice her shyness. He examines the foot and says: "A little swollen, but nothing major. A lot less spectacular compared to the horn on your head."

Jian Yao gives him a glance of disapproval.

What a day. She sighs: "Would the knock make me more stupid..."

Bo Jinyan has gone back to the driver's seat and started the car. He starts to get out of the complex: "Don't worry, my IQ is 180, doesn't matter if you lose a bit of your IQ. You have me."

That's sweet...in a strange sort of way.

She complains: "Is that meant to be words of comfort?"

Bo Jinyan gives her a smile. They are back on the main road. Home is not far away now.

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Bo Jinyan stops at a red traffic light.

He turns to look at Jian Yao. She looks so lovely in her sleep.

After a long stare, he takes his eyes off her and continues driving.